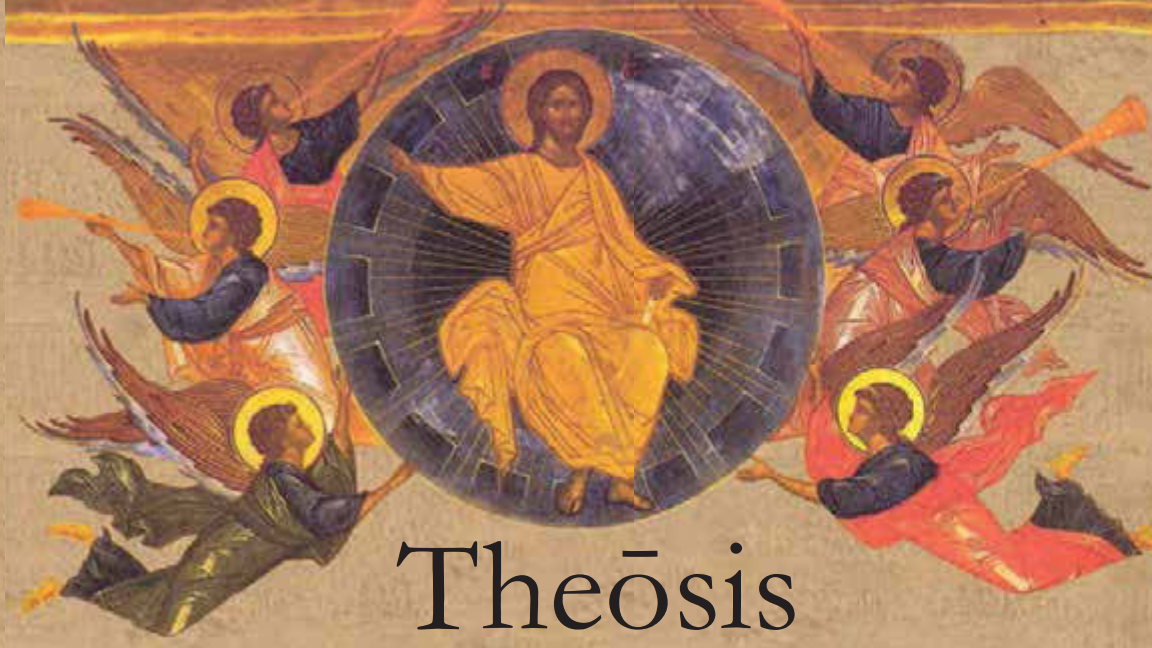

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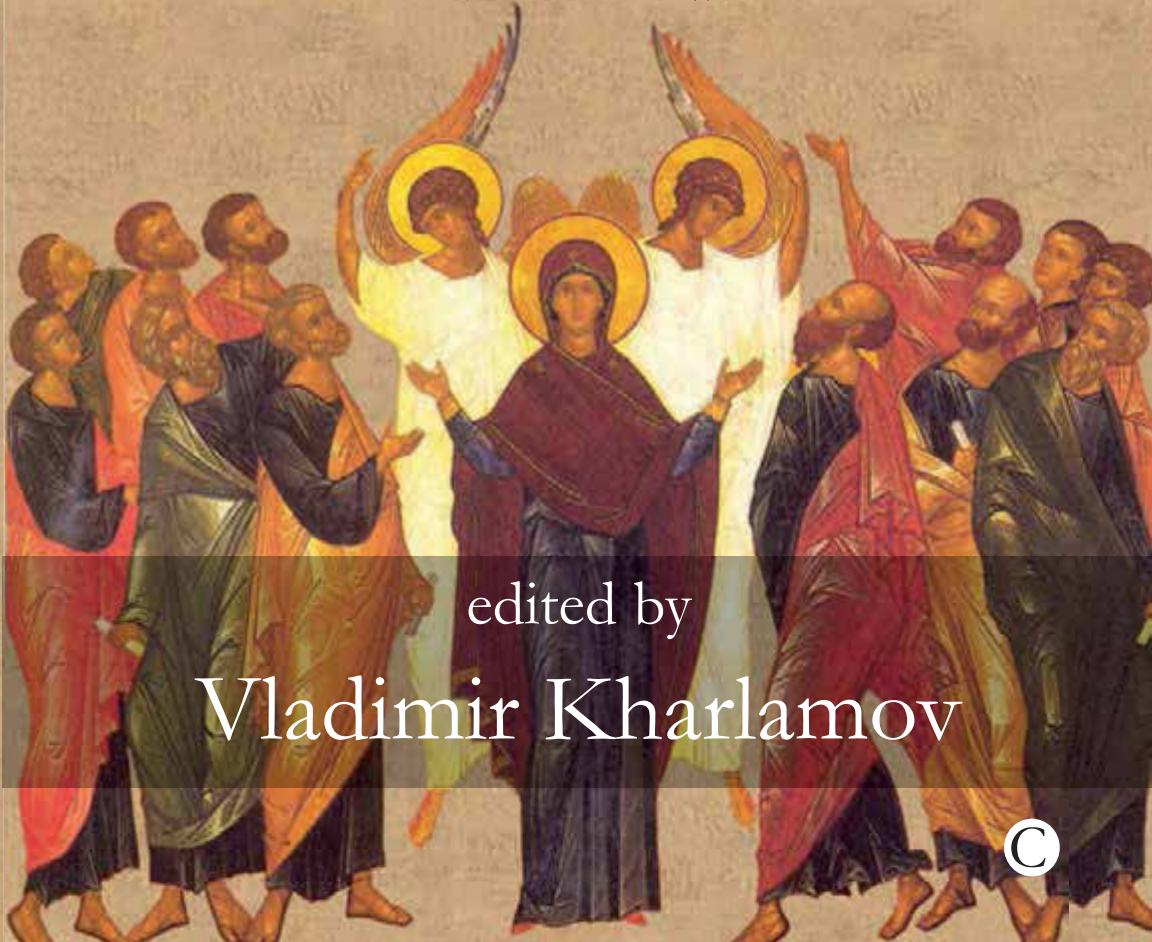
Deification in Christian Theology

Volume Two



edited by

Vladimir Kharlamov

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Deification in Christian Theology

Volume Two

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Abbreviations

ABBREVIATIONS FOR EDITIONS AND COLLECTIONS

ACW	Ancient Christian Writers: The Works of the Fathers in Translation. Mahwah, NJ: Paulist, 1946–.
ANF	*The Ante-Nicene Fathers.* Edited by Alexander Roberts and James Donaldson. 1885–1887. 10 vols. Reprint. Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1994.
CSCO	Corpus Scriptorum Christianorum Orientalium. Louvain, Belgium, 1903–.
FC	Fathers of the Church: A New Translation. Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 1947–.
GCS	Die griechischen christlichen Schriftsteller der ersten Jahrhunderte. Berlin: Akademie, 1897–.
GNO	W. Jaeger, ed. *Gregorii Nysseni Opera*. Leiden: Brill, 1952–.
LCC	J. Baillie et al., eds. The Library of Christian Classics. 26 vols. Philadelphia: Westminster, 1953–1966.
LCL	Loeb Classical Library. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1912–.
LF	*A Library of Fathers of the Holy Catholic Church Anterior to the Division of the East and West.* Translated by members of the English Church. Oxford: John Henry Parker, 1838–1881.
NPNF	*The Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*. 2 series. Edited by Philip Schaff. 1886–1889. 28 vols. Reprint. Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1994.
PG	*Patrologiae Cursus Completus, Series Graeca*. 166 vols. Edited by J. P. Migne. Paris, 1857–1886.

PL	*Patrologiae Cursus Completus, Series Latina*. 221 vols. Edited by J. P. Migne. Paris, 1844–1864.
Pusey	Pusey, P. E. *Sancti Patris Nostri Cyrilli Archiepiscopi Alexandrini in D. Joannis Evangelium,* 3 Vols. Oxford: Clarendon, 1872; Reprint. Brussels: Culture et Civilisation, 1965.
SC	*Sources Chrétiennes*. Edited by H. de Lubac, J. Daniélou, et al. Paris: Editions du Cerf, 1941–.
SVC	Supplements to Vigiliae Christianae
TEP	Theodore of Mopsuestia. *Theodori episcopi Mopsuesteni: In epistolas b. Pauli commentarii*. Edited by Henry Barclay Swete. 2 Vols. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1880–82.

ABBREVIATIONS FOR PRIMARY WORKS

Aetius

Synt.	*Syntagmation*

Athanasius

Ar.	*Orationes tres adversus Arianos*
De Inc.	*De Incarnatione*
De Inc. et c. Ar.	*De Incarnatione et contra Arianos*
De Syn.	*De synodis Arimini in Italia et Seleuciae in Isauria*
Ep. Epict.	*Epistula ad Epictetum*
Ep. Serap.	*Epistulae quattuor ad Serapionem*
Vit. Anton.	*Vita Antonii*

Athenagoras

Leg.	*Legatio* sive *Supplicatio pro Christianis*

Augustine

Conf.	*Confessionum*

Basil of Caesarea

Ep.	*Epistulae*
Eun.	*Adversus Eunomium*
Hex.	*Homiliae in hexaemeron*
Hom. div.	*Homiliae diversae*
Hom. Ps.	*Homiliae super Psalmos*
Reg. fus.	*Regulae Fusius Tractatae*
Spir.	*De spiritu sancto ad Amphilochium*

Clement of Alexandria

Paed.	*Paedagogus*
Prot.	*Protrepticus* sive *Cohortatio ad gentes*
QDS	*Quis Dives Salvetur*
Strom.	*Stromata*

Cyril of Alexandria

Ador.	*De adoratione in spiritu et veritate*
Jn.	*Commentarii in Joannem*

Cyril of Jerusalem

Catech.	*Catecheses ad illuminandos*
Myst.	*Mystagogiae*

Epiphanius

Haer.	*Panarion* seu *Adversus LXXX haereses*

The Epistle to Diognetus

Diogn.	*Epistula ad Diognetum*

Eunomius

Apol.	*Liber Apologeticus*
Apol. Apol.	*Apologia Apologiae*
Exp. Fidei	*Expositio Fidei*

Fr.	*Fragmenta*

Eusebius of Caesarea

HE	*Historia Ecclesiastica*

Gregory of Nazianzus

Ep.	*Epistulae*
Or.	*Orationes*
Carm.	*Carmina dogmatica* = *Carm.* 1.1.1–38; *Carmina moralia*= *Carm.* 1.2.1–40; *Carmina de se ipso* = *Carm.* 2.1.1–99; *Carmina quae spectant ad alios* = *Carm.* 2.2.1–8

Gregory of Nyssa

Ad Theoph.	*Ad Theophilum adversus Apollinarium*
Antirrh.	*Antirrheticus adversus Apollinarium*
Anim. et res.	*Dialogus de anima et resurrectione*
Cont. Eunom.	*Contra Eunomium*
De beatit.	*Orationes viii de beatitudinibus*
De inf.	*De infantibus premature abreptis*
De opif.	*De opificio hominis*
De perf.	*De perfectione Christiana ad Olympium monachum*
De prof. Chr.	*De professione Christiana ad Harmonium*
De virg.	*De virginitate*
In Cant.	*In Canticum canticorum*
In Eccl.	*In Ecclesiasten (homiliae 8)*
In Ps.	*In inscriptiones psalmorum*
Or. Dom.	*De oratione dominica*
Or. Cat.	*Oratio catechetica magna*
Trin.	*Ad Eustathimum De sancta trinitate*
Vit. Mos.	*De vita Mosis*

Ignatius of Antioch

Smyrn.	*Epistula ad Smyrnaeos*
Trall.	*Epistula ad Trallianos*

Irenaeus

Haer.	*Adversus haereses*
Dem.	*Demonstratio apostolicae praedicatonis*

Jerome

De Vir. Illustr.	*De Viris Illustribus*

John Cassian

Inst.	*De institutis coenobiorum*

Justin

Dial.	*Dialogus cum Tryphone*

Origen

C. Cel.	*Contra Celsum*
Com. Jn.	*Commentarii in evangelium Joannis*
Princ.	*De principiis*

Plato

Theaet.	*Theaetetus*

Pseudo-Dionysius the Areopagite

CH	*De caelesti hierarchia*
EH	*De ecclesiastica hierarchia*
DN	*De divinis nominibus*
MT	*De mystica theologia*
Ep.	*Epistulae*

Socrates Scholasticus

HE	*Historia ecclesiastica*

Tatian

Orat.	*Oratio ad Graecos*

Tertullian

Bapt.	*De baptismo*

Theophilus of Antioch

Ad Autol.	*Ad Autolycum*

Introduction

Vladimir Kharlamov

I would like to begin the introduction to this book with a quote from A. M. Allchin:

> The Christian tradition is thus full of an affirmation of God's nearness to humankind, and of our unrealized potential for God. The basic affirmations that Jesus is Lord, Jesus is the Christ, are affirmations about the possibilities of [hu]man, about the intimacy of relationship between human and divine, no less than about the mystery of God. They speak about the meeting, a union of God with humankind which alters our understanding, our deepest experience of what it is to be human, which gives us a new vision of the whole creation and alters the substance of our living and dying. They open up the full meaning of our calling to become partakers of the divine nature, to become sons in the one Son, to be filled with the Holy Spirit. They speak of deification.[1]

This quote eloquently sums up the main magnetism behind the Christian understanding of theosis. It never ceased to lure theologians throughout two millennia of Christian heritage, in spite of occasional uneasiness, ambiguity about its particular content, terminological diversity, and at times, open criticism and dismissal. The theme of deification intimately touches on human identity and actualization of humanity's ultimate purpose. It is predominantly an anthropological and soteriological expression of Christian theology. At the same time, it testifies to the identity of a Christian God, divine universal design, and God's economy, where the trinitarian and christological apprehension receives the central place. Theosis, both on an individual and cosmic scale, is not exiguous in its eschatological perspective, either. Theosis testifies to the inexplicably grand mystery of God's divine intimacy with

1. Allchin, *Participation*, 63.

human beings. Deification penetrates all spheres of human existence, and can be seen as an answer to most pending ultimate questions. It is essentially practical in its manifestation and uplifting in its content, but nevertheless, always evasive and arcane in its comprehension. Being such an interconnecting tenet of different fields of Christian theology and diverse Christian traditions, deification, by no surprise, continues to be an attractive subject in theological discourse on academic and popular levels. It can amply be seen in numerous publications on the subject since the publication of our first volume in 2006.

The main interest in theosis is traditionally associated with Eastern Orthodox spirituality and the modern Orthodox literature is by no means a stranger to the discussion on theosis. On the popular side, there is a sermonic-like booklet *Achieving Your Potential in Christ: Theosis: Plain Talks on a Major Doctrine of Orthodoxy* (1993) by Anthony Coniaris that draws insights from Orthodox tradition, along with catchy quotes and references to a wide range of sources, including Meister Eckhart, Ralph Waldo Emerson, Henry Ford, Thomas Merton, and Hasidic sayings, among others. Another popular, but more comprehensive, short book on theosis in English is *Partakers of Divine Nature* by Christoforos Stavropoulos, that was published in 1976.[2] In that book Stavropoulos presents deification in the context of the general Eastern Orthodox understanding of salvific workings of the divine economy, the sacramental life of the church, and the spiritual life of prayer. Archimandrite Sophrony's (Sakharov) book *We Shall See Him as He Is* (2006) offers insightful, deeply testimonial witness to the Orthodox spiritual life, where deification is one of the central themes. Anthropological, cosmological, and economic aspects of theosis received additional attention in a recent essay by Hieromonk Damascene, "Created in Incorruption: The Orthodox patristic Understanding of Man and the Cosmos in Their Original, Fallen, and Redeemed States," *Orthodox Word* 44 (2008) 9–99. In this extensive essay, Damascene, in almost patristic catena style, attempts to delineate the main characteristics of the prelapsarian, current, and eschatological elements of the human and cosmic soteriological process. Fr. Bijesh Philip offers an intriguing account of the contemporary Orthodox appropriation of theosis, with a peculiarly Indian cultural and spiritual flavor. In his book, *Theosis and Mission: An*

2. See also Anstall, *Aspects of Theosis* and Capsanis, *The Deification as the Purpose of Man's Life*.

Orthodox Perspective of Christian Spirituality in the Age of Globalisation (2004), he emphasizes the importance of theosis in the mission of the church in the context of modern challenges of globalization, secularism, HIV/AIDS epidemic, consumerism, exploitation in the third world countries, environmental concerns, and with many other issues "that seem to unsettle our lives in the present world."[3]

From a more comprehensive theological point of view, the works of Vladimir Lossky and his influence on the re-vitalization of deification discourse in modern Orthodox thought are well known and, for the purpose of our bibliographical survey, do not require an introduction. The works of Romanian theologian Dumitru Staniloae, that are only now becoming more readily available in English, also extensively address the teaching of the Orthodox Church on deification. In this regard, I would like especially to refer to the second volume of his *Orthodox Dogmatic Theology: The World: Creation and Deification* (2005) and to his *Orthodox Spirituality* (2003). Predominantly the Neopalamite approach to deification that was inaugurated in the works of Florovsky and Lossky that substantially inspired above mentioned books by Coniaris, Stavropoulos, and Staniloae, was to some degree consolidated by Georgios Mantzaridis in his *The Deification of Man: St Gregory Palamas and the Orthodox Tradition* (1984).

Panayiotis Nellas's book, *Deification in Christ: Orthodox Perspective on the Nature of the Human Person* (1987) contributes significantly to the development of a christocentric anthropological approach to theosis, which often the author terms "christification." In the comprehensive and constructive assessment of a long list of patristic authorities on the subject, he gives particular preference to the late Byzantine theologian Nicolas Kabasilas. This book presents a theologically anthropological outlook on deification that is not only informative in an historical perspective on the deification theme, but also provides an interesting and insightful theological appropriation of theosis, that places its author, Panayiotis Nellas, among leading modern and original Eastern Orthodox theologians in the twentieth century.

More recently, another attempt to express the predominantly Palamite view of deification as the "classical" or standard understanding of theosis in Eastern Orthodoxy was offered by Stephen Thomas

3. Philip, *Theosis and Mission*, 9.

in *Deification in the Eastern Orthodox Tradition: A Biblical Perspective* (2007). The main objective Thomas attempts to accomplish in his book is to show the importance and vitality of the biblical foundation for the Greek Fathers and Orthodox tradition on theosis. He hopes to spark a biblical revival for Orthodox Christians living in the West. Thus, the book is purposefully not designed for academicians and does not pretend to be original. Nevertheless, in his not always "classically" Neopalamite discourse, Thomas presents a rather intriguing and engaging synthesis of specifically Western biblical scholarship, adopted and complemented with distinctive theological characteristics of Eastern Orthodox theology and spirituality. The book seems to accomplish its intention and can be read not only as an overview of the Orthodox understanding of deification, but as an introduction to Eastern Orthodoxy aimed for biblically-minded, evangelical, Western readership. It is an interesting attempt to combine modern biblical scholarship with Orthodox spirituality.

In the context of such seemingly abundant literature on deification in the Orthodox tradition, we especially welcome the recent book by Norman Russell, *Fellow Workers with God: Orthodox Thinking on Theosis* (2009). Russell is mostly known as the prominent translator of theological and patristic works from modern and ancient Greek into English, and for his significant contribution to the field of patristic studies, especially to the discourse on theosis. His *The Doctrine of Deification in the Greek patristic Tradition* (2004) is a most comprehensive survey on deification in the Greek Fathers, expanding broad groundwork started by Roman Catholic theologian Jules Gross,[4] and further explored by Andreas Theodorou.[5]

Russell's *Fellow Workers with God* begins with the survey of the revival of the interest in theosis in twentieth-century Orthodox theology, that was due to several factors: the rediscovery of Gregory Palamas, the impact of Russian religious philosophy, recovery of the *Philokalia*, and renewal of interest in the Greek Fathers. As was the case in the patristic period, in modern Orthodox thought there are a variety of emphases when it comes to theosis. However, this apparent diversity,

4. Gross, *Divinization*.

5. Theodorou, *Ἡ περὶ θεώσεως τοῦ ἀνθρώπου* [*The Teaching on the Human Deification*].

according to Russell, is "fundamentally convergent."[6] The importance of deification comes in the context of the divine economy of salvation, with culmination in the incarnation of Christ, "To see Christ is to know what it means to be God."[7] It is not simply a reflection on the historical role of Christ in the salvation of humankind, as Christ's soteriological presence in the process of the divine economy that impacts everyday human life. The process of the reconciliation and glorification that was accomplished by Christ requires active human participation. It is a transformative experience that enables human beings to "become not 'who' Christ is but 'what' he is."[8] Thus, theosis is not merely another term for salvation and sanctification.

Already in the patristic period, Russell observes two patterns that define the role of theosis within divine economy. One, predominantly expressed by Athanasius and Cyril of Alexandria, is more biblically oriented, with emphasis on justification, sanctification, divine filiation, and participation in the divine nature. Another, represented by Maximus the Confessor and the later Fathers, is more speculative and philosophical, with more explicitly stated eschatological cosmic fulfillment. A similar tendency, according to Russell, continues among modern Eastern Orthodox theologians, the majority of whom are patristic scholars.

After discussing the scriptural foundations of theosis (predominantly the two key texts: Ps 82 [81 LXX]:1, 6–7 [cf. John 10:33–36] and 2 Pet 1:4) and their exegetical application in patristic theology, Russell emphasizes the testimonial importance of "the overall structure of the Bible"[9] to the representation of deification, both for patristic and modern Orthodox thought.

The remainder of the book deals with the primary theological themes closely connected with theosis: image and likeness of God, the transfiguration of the believer, self-transcendence, participation in the divine life, and union with God. In each of these themes, Russell draws heavily on Greek patristic and monastic tradition and its appropriation in modern Orthodox, again, predominantly monastic and Neopatristic expression.

6. Russell, *Fellow Workers*, 30.
7. Ibid., 35.
8. Ibid., 36.
9. Ibid., 69.

While some patristic authors did not draw a distinction between the image and likeness of God, for others the image of God was understood as setting the structural (ontological) basis for our relationship with God with its dynamic realization in divine likeness. The transfiguration of the believer is presented extensively in the context of the hesychastic tradition of unceasing prayer where Russell also briefly touches on the role of the vision of God in theosis.

Human self-transcendence, as fullness of human self-realization, occupies an important place in theosis that links human knowledge of the self with God and, through mystical rapture, establishes a deificational relationship between God and the human person. This transcending self-realization, transformative and christological in its character and manifestation, is not the inherent potentiality of human nature, but the result of participation in divine grace through intellectual, ascetic, and liturgical aspects of Christian life. This apophatically expressed speculative mysticism of self-transcendence—deeply embedded in Neoplatonic philosophy, Pseudo-Dionysius the Areopagite, and Maximus the Confessor with subsequent influence of hesychasm—acquires the leading role in the Eastern Orthodox understanding of theosis. Russell briefly points out how the influence of Berdyaev's existentialist philosophy, significantly reinterpreted in the Neopatristic perspective by Vladimir Lossky, Christos Yannaras, and John Zizioulas, shapes the modern Orthodox response to personalist philosophy and its attempt to explain "how finite human beings can attain communion with a God who is personal and yet also infinite and supremely transcendent."[10]

In the discussion of participation in the divine life, after briefly pointing out the meaning of the word "participation" in English and Greek, Russell concisely summarizes the main points of the patristic approach to participation in the context of deification, with its culmination in Gregory Palamas and subsequent influence of Palamism on modern Orthodox theology. Some uneasiness with Palamas's essence/energy distinction in God—some offer the distinction full-hearted support (Lossky, Yannaras, and the majority of other modern Orthodox theologians) whilst others express reservations about it (Zizioulas)—in Russell's opinion, is not so much evidence of divergence, as "the fruit of

10. Ibid., 126.

profound meditation on different strands of the patristic tradition" that are mainly complementary.[11]

The theme of union with God, according to Russell, was systematically introduced to patristic theology by Pseudo-Dionysius the Areopagite, and from him firmly integrated in the Orthodox understanding of theosis. The nature of divine-human union, which neither presupposes identification of human beings with God nor human dissolution into the divine, is predominantly interpreted in later patristic and modern Orthodox thought in Palamite terms: "We become the same as God but different, a unity-in-diversity through participating in the divine energies."[12]

Especially useful in this context is Russell's summary-discussion-analysis of the somewhat "dissident" or maverick and, at the same time, innovative and original contributions to the theosis discourse made by Nicholas Berdyaev and Sergey Bulgakov, that still continue to stir tensions in Orthodox circles. Russell concludes his book by pointing out the practical aspect of theosis as the soteriological dimension of Christian life within the ecclesial community, with an eschatological perspective. This aspect of theosis is not the prerogative of spiritual elite, but "it is intended for all believers without exception."[13] On the theological side, the multi-faceted and dynamic character of deification discourse within Eastern Orthodoxy, and inter-denominational interest in theosis, should be welcomed as this discourse is far from being finalized.

The Eastern Orthodox interest in theosis, without doubt, makes an important contribution to the study of this subject. However, it does not hold anymore to the exclusive role often claimed by Orthodox theologians. As it has been already pointed out by Russell, even in modern Orthodox theology, theosis is far from being an univocally settled issue. Recent interest in deification also confirms that this theme attracts attention for its own sake, sometimes without a direct connection to Orthodox tradition. In this regard, I especially welcome the conclusion that one of the Eastern Orthodox theologians has recently drawn with respect to deification: "Clearly, the notion of *theosis* is no longer 'owned'

11. Ibid., 141.
12. Ibid., 146.
13. Ibid., 169.

by the Christian East, if such one-sided ownership was ever a historical possibility."[14] Even though Gavrilyuk's re-visitation of contemporary discourse on the deification theme is still overshadowed by implications of past ecumenical developments, and the presumption that Eastern Orthodoxy has a "copyright" on it, his assessment is particularly helpful in emphasizing theosis as a significant issue of ongoing theological conversation on its own grounds, apart from denominational boundaries and a directly ecumenical incentive.

One noteworthy recent publication on theosis that attempts to offer a constructive theological examination is Paul Collins's *Partaking in Divine Nature: Deification and Communion* (2010). Collins briefly reviews deificational precedents in popular pre-Christian Roman and Greek piety, Greek philosophy, Christian Scripture, and early patristic theology. His main focus is on an analysis of deification in Eastern Orthodoxy, which he presents in a reverse historical perspective, starting with the modern period and sequentially moving back to Pseudo-Dionysius the Areopagite and Maximus the Confessor. Acknowledging the central role of theosis in Eastern Orthodox theology, often viewed as the core expression of self-understanding and the peculiar identity of this tradition, Collins proceeds to survey theosis in Western theology. His overview of Western Christian tradition includes not only medieval witness to deification, but also examination of explicit and implicit evidence of what he terms as "an architecture of the metaphor of deification" in the Reformation (including the Radical Reformation), Pietism, the Oxford movement, the Holiness movement, and concludes with contemporary Roman Catholic expression.

In this book, Collins is drawing a survey of deification that stretches over two-and-a-half millennia. This does not leave much room for a detailed assessment of peculiarities related to theosis diversity; nevertheless, his book presents an important reminder of, and testimony to, the vitality of the deification theme in both Eastern and Western Christian traditions. Particular interest in this book is due to Collins's methodology of functionalization, and construal of the deification metaphor for contemporary theology, within the methodology of mystical theology, dynamic participation in the Trinity, sacramental theology, and the practice of virtuous life in Christ. This book presents one of the first

14. Gavrilyuk, "Retrieval of Deification," 657.

theological constructive assessments of theosis and its importance for contemporary Christianity.

Michael Gorman's well researched, annotated, and contextualized book, *Inhabiting the Cruciform God: Kenosis, Justification, and Theosis in Paul's Narrative Soteriology* (2009), presents a comprehensive assessment of the main Pauline tenets, such as kenosis, sanctification, justification, holiness, and participation, where theosis receives central treatment in the integrated soteriological perspective of Paul's theology. In the beginning of the book Gorman offers a trinitarian and christocentrically-minded definition of theosis: "Theosis is transformative participation in the kenotic, cruciform character of God through Spirit-enabled conformity to the incarnate, crucified, and resurrected/glorified Christ."[15] And throughout his book Gorman is successfully arguing, as he sums it up: "for a single Pauline soteriology of participation in the life of the triune cruciform God known in the cross of Christ, and we have called this theosis."[16]

Portraying God's kenotic descent in Christ, and his acting in what can be seen as a shockingly ungodly manner for the common human perception of divinity, Paul elevates the significance of Christ's suffering, death, and resurrection, and proclaims Christ to be the Lord, in contrast to the typical Roman understanding of imperial power and honor. The contrast between the divinity of Christ, kenotically manifested in his humanity, and the divinity of the Roman imperial cult, is especially important for an understanding of vertical and horizontal dimensions of divine economy and its manifestation in Christian community. It is also important for understanding the role of Christian community in the participatory and reciprocal process of transformative deification: a process that is both reminiscent of traditional Christian understanding of the *imitatio Christi*, and the representation of theosis as christification.

Gorman's dealing with justification in Paul is exceptionally good. He proposes very valuable methodology for his interpretation of justification, the cross, and salvation in Paul, that also can be effectively applied to the study of theosis.[17] Implementing his five-principle methodology:

15. Gorman, *Inhabiting Cruciform God*, 7.
16. Ibid., 162.
17. Ibid., 46–48.

1) recognition of contextual specificity; 2) the practice of prudent connectivity; 3) recognition of theological complementarity; 4) recognition of the experiential character of Paul's theology; and 5) recognition of flexible coherency, allows Gorman to construct Paul's understanding of justification in a very deiforming perspective. Gorman masterfully argues against reducing justification to a simply forensic expression that significantly minimizes the soteriological importance of this theological theme in the context of Christ's salvific mission. Gorman expands the common Protestant cliché of forensic justification to a more complex, but well grounded in Pauline and Christian tradition, understanding of justification as a participatory and transformative experience, closely connected with sanctification and holiness. Thus, justification is understood as deification, where there is no separation of God's justice from love, and love from faith, and faith from action. Holiness and sanctification are not additions to justification, but its actualization. The interconnectedness of justification, sanctification, and holiness with kenotic, transformative, reconciliatory and theoforming participation in faithfulness of Christ, expressed in the trinitarian contextualization of cruciform theosis in Pauline theology, presents one integrated soteriology.

Gorman's interpretation of Paul's understanding of kenosis, justification, reconciliation, sanctification, holiness, participation, co-crucifixion, and theosis, reciprocally tied together not only sheds a new light on the contemporary field of Pauline studies but also allows us to see Paul and the coherence of his theology in a more historically and theologically adequate perspective. Intentionally or unintentionally, *Inhabiting the Cruciform God* creates a bridge from exclusively New Testament Studies, to the role and influence of Paul's writings on the development of patristic theology; or at least how early Christian authors read and understood Paul.

In my book, *"The Beauty of the Unity and the Harmony of the Whole:" The Concept of Theosis in the Theology of Pseudo-Dionysius the Areopagite* (2009), I attempt to trace the emergence and development of the deification theme in Greek patristic theology with its subsequent transformation into the theology of theosis in Pseudo-Dionysius the Areopagite. The main focus is to present the deification theme as it is situated in the complex context of its historical development and, thus, to avoid the commonly stated tendency to treat this notion of Christian

theology in an anachronistic manner. In my opinion, the universal presence of deification in early Christian writers was often overstated. Historical analysis of the development of the deification theme, and the formation of a specific terminology associated with it, shows that it was a gradual process, far from being homogeneous. The notion of deification in the first five centuries had a very marginal character and was often addressed on the periphery of other theological issues. This marginal application of the deification theme indicates that it was predominantly used as a rhetorical tool and a notion of popular theology, as it still lacked coherent systematic theological treatment.

The role of Pseudo-Dionysius in the consolidation of theosis is crucial, but it is by no means final. Nevertheless, after Pseudo-Dionysius, theosis experienced not only more systematic treatment as an independent subject of theological discourse, but it becomes one of the basic principles of Byzantine theology, and consequently of Eastern Orthodoxy.

The peculiar character of Dionysian theology could not be accurately appropriated without study of its relationship to later Neoplatonism. Therefore, significant attention in my book is given to the aspects of the influence this tradition had on Pseudo-Dionysius, in connection to the deification theme. Pseudo-Dionysian theology is justified neither as essentially "orthodox" Christian nor essentially "orthodox" Neoplatonic. Dionysius' intricate synthesis of Christian and Neoplatonic elements, especially in his exposition of theosis, pays better justice to this anonymous author's originality, and demonstrates the significance of his influence, both on the further development of Christian theology, and the advancement of Neoplatonic tradition.

The enigmatic nature of the *Dionysian Corpus* does not cease to puzzle scholars. Generally, Pseudo-Dionysius is approached from a solely Neoplatonic, or solely Christian, perspective. The outcome of this tendency obviously predetermines the treatment of his works, and in neither case pays proper justice to this body of literature. In my book, I attempt to research both lines of influence in the context of the overarching cultural background that was a significant aspect for the formation of a Christian imperial identity, and the development of Late Antiquity. This approach helps to situate and appropriate the *Dionysian Corpus* in a more accurate historical context, and to throw some additional light on the possible attribution of these works to Dionysius the

Areopagite, not as a conscious forgery, but as a literary device, not an uncommon feature of the time.

Another recent book that mostly deals with Pseudo-Dionysius, but also touches on deification, is *Divine Light: The Theology of Denys the Areopagite* (2008) written by William Riordan. In *Divine Light*, the reader finds a friendly treatment of Dionysian theology presented in very accessible, but well researched and documented, form. The author attempts, and to some degree succeeds, to present this enigmatic corpus of Christian literature in its adequate historical and theological context. Treating the content of the corpus as unquestionably Christian and orthodox, Riordan clears, often without sufficient argumentation, Pseudo-Dionysius of all unfavorable charges.

Overall, the author presents a very attractive and innovative, although frequently speculative, synthesis of Dionysian theology, at times interpreting Dionysian theology in the context of its later appropriation in Christian tradition and contemporary scholarship. He even goes as far as trying to fill in gaps in Dionysian discourse; in other words, trying to state affirmatively what Pseudo-Dionysius might have been thinking, where the text of the corpus does not state it explicitly. His analysis of the relationship between Pseudo-Dionysius and Neoplatonic philosophy often betrays rather sketchy and limited, rather than comprehensive, engagement with Neoplatonic sources, and the tremendous complexities of this philosophical tradition in Late Antiquity and its impact on Pseudo-Dionysius.

The central role of theosis in Dionysian discourse is properly acknowledged, but its treatment is predominantly contextualized to the main exposition of Dionysian theology, rather than giving it a detailed and systematic assessment for its own sake. Riordan's analysis of the Dionysian view of God, and God's relation to the cosmos, as a sacred theatre of divinization, and his analysis of the human divinizing ascent of the soul, at times seems unintentionally slipping into the typically Neoplatonic form of paradoxical, but pantheistic, understanding of divine unity. Riordan's handling of deification, as well as his general outlook on Dionysian theology, will be more reminiscent of the eclectic synthesis of the mystical spirituality of Plotinus, an understanding of the role of theurgy in Iamblichus, and the pantheistic metaphysical structure of Proclus than an accurate appropriation of this theme in the text of the *Areopagitica*.

The appendix to his book, on the treatment of rites of initiation in the work of Mircea Eliade, is remarkable in itself. It is probably the first precedent in Dionysian scholarship to draw a comparative analysis "between the Buryat shamanic initiation ceremony and the mystical initiation described by Denys." Only one thing remains, what would the author of the *Mystical Theology* think about it?

Among other recent publications on theosis, I shall mention the thorough treatment of Thomas F. Torrance's approach to deification in Myk Habet's book, *Theosis in the Theology of Thomas Torrance* (2009); the published dissertation of William Schumacher, *Who Do I Say That You Are? Anthropology and the Theology of Theosis in the Finnish School of Tuomo Mannermaa* (2010); and Stephen Davis's book, *Coptic Christology in Practice: Incarnation and Divine Participation in Late Antique and Medieval Egypt* (2008), that, through the narrative of Coptic Christology, extensively touches on the deification theme.

The last, but not the least, recent book on theosis I would like to discuss briefly in this introduction is Daniel Keating's *Deification and Grace* (2007).[18] Keating offers a very thoughtful and clear introduction to the basic aspects related to the deification theme/doctrine "as the full outworking of grace in the Christian life."[19] Starting his exposition with variations of the deification exchange formula and the language of deification, with its scriptural and christological significance in the history of Christian theology, Keating turns to the discussion of soteriological implications, where deification is closely linked to divine filiation and sanctification. The direct divine agency in the initiation of human deification as the "effective indwelling in us"[20] and "participation in the divine life"[21] is closely connected to the regenerating efficiency of the sacraments of baptism and the Eucharist. Continuous human progress in theosis that culminates in transformation into full maturity of Christ's image, is intimately connected to divine indwelling, that both initiates divine filiation, and sustains human progress in the divine life of Christ. Such important traditional theological language that is closely affiliated with theosis, as "image" and "likeness," "human perfection," "virtue," "par-

18. See also his, *Appropriation of Divine Life*.
19. Daniel Keating, *Deification and Grace*, 5.
20. Ibid., 41.
21. Ibid., 48.

ticipation," sharing in Christ's suffering, death, and resurrection, the role of prayer and asceticism, just to name a few, is adequately expounded in overarching biblical and christocentric perspectives. Keating's book presents a good summary of theosis that in well-balanced and concise form outlines and explains the main elements intrinsically connected to the Christian understanding of human deification. I highly recommend this book for anyone who is interested in theosis.

With such ostensive number of publications on theosis that have sprung up in recent years, our current volume attempts not to summarize, or repeat, what has been already expounded on the subject, but to contribute to the ongoing interest in Christian understanding of deification. The complex terminological, experiential, speculative, mystical, soteriological, historical, and theological intensity that are inherently present in understanding the meaning of theosis in Christian theology, manifested themselves from the early patristic period, and never ceased to amaze and bewilder anyone who approached this theme.

This book is aimed at both those who are already students of theosis and those who are looking for an introductory text. For example, Ivan Popov's essay on history of theosis in the early Eastern Church—virtually inaccessible before and known only to a very few experts—presents a valuable analysis of deification that is for the first time available in English. Other contributions to this volume cover subjects that in the opinions of their authors have not yet received sufficient attention, or were under-represented. They comprise both historical analyses and theological developments on the appropriation of theosis in Christian tradition both past and present. The volume is supplied with a comprehensive up-to-date bibliography for resources on theosis.

Fully aware of the specificities of any particular Christian tradition, the contributors to this volume, without minimizing the complexity of the subject, attempt to work in the context of prudent connectivity, theological complementarity, and flexible coherency.[22] We begin this volume with Stephen Finlan's essay, "Deification in Jesus' Teaching," that focuses predominantly on three vivid deification passages in the Gospels: one that speaks of the kingdom of God within, another that commands dis-

22. Here I am adopting Michael Gorman's methodological principles that he proposed for the treatment of justification, the cross, and salvation in Paul, which in my turn I find very applicable to integrating different aspects of the deification discourse. See Gorman, *Inhabiting Cruciform God*, 46–48.

ciples to be perfect like the Father, and one where Jesus quotes "you are gods" from a Psalm (Luke 17:21; Matt 5:48; John 10:34). The notion of the kingdom within is not alien to Luke, which contains many passages about being filled with the Spirit, with "good treasure" or "light" (Luke 1:15; 6:45; 11:36; 12:12; etc.). Matthew's perfection saying indicates a never-ending process of taking on God's character, consistent with the emphasis on honesty and good works. In John 10:35, Jesus connects deification with the reception of revelation, pointing out that the phrase "you are gods" was uttered to "those to whom the word of God came." This may be synonymous with the notion of receiving the "power to become children of God" (John 1:12; cf. 1 John 3:1–2), of doing "greater works" or being guided "into all the truth" (14:12; 16:13). While Mark lacks any overt deification references, human deifying transformation is suggested in this Gospel in remarks about healing, people doing the will of God, and people becoming Jesus' brothers and sisters.

Finlan concludes that many Gospel passages support, or at least allow for, the idea of deification: Synoptic references to the kingdom "near," to being pure of heart or doing the will of God, and Johannine references to the indwelling presence of Jesus and the Father. Finlan also analyzes two sayings in *The Gospel of Thomas* that refer to the kingdom within, and comes to the conclusion that Gnostic texts do not always have more inwardness than orthodox texts.

Ivan Popov's essay, "The Idea of Deification in the Early Eastern Church," rendered in English by the leading translator of Russian religious philosophy and theology Boris Jakim, requires a little introduction to its author. Ivan Vasilevich Popov (1867–1938) is one of the prominent Russian patristic scholars of the early twentieth century. He was the son of a parish priest in Vyazma, Smolensk region. Popov followed an education pattern typical for the clergy class in the imperial Russia. He studied at the Vyazma Spiritual School, then in the Smolensk Spiritual Seminary, wrapping up his education at the Moscow Spiritual Academy. He was invited to join the faculty of the Academy upon graduation. Additionally, Popov studied in Germany, where, among other things, he attended lectures of Adolf Harnack. Popov taught in the Moscow Spiritual Academy until it was closed by the Bolshevik government in 1919. After 1919, Popov was systematically arrested, exiled, imprisoned, and released. While in exile, in September of 1937, he was arrested again, and on February 5, 1938, sentenced to be shot. Popov was executed in

Eniseysk on February 8, 1938. In 2003 he was canonized by the Russian Orthodox Church.

Ivan Popov is the author of numerous articles and monographs that broadly cover both Latin and Greek Fathers. His academic and research interests were not limited only to the study of early Christianity. Popov published a number of works in ethics, philosophy, and psychology. Among his major works in patristics are *The Religious Ideal of St. Athanasius of Alexandria* (1904), *Mystical Justification of Asceticism in Works of St. Macarius of Egypt* (1904), *St. John Chrysostom and His Enemies* (1908), *Personality and Teaching of the Blessed Augustine* (1917). His two extensive biographies of Amphilochius of Iconium and Hilary of Poitiers were written during the Soviet period and published posthumously (1968–1971). Popov's "The Idea of Deification in the Early Eastern Church" presents the first comprehensive and critical theological assessment of this notion in modern patristic scholarship. Published in Russian and not translated in any Western languages, this seminal work remained virtually unknown outside of Russia until now.

In my essay, "Clement of Alexandria on Trinitarian and Metaphysical Relationality in the Context of Deification," I assess an intricate application of a metaphysical aspect of theosis in Clement and its contextualization in Clement's trinitarian theology. In Clement's understanding of God the Father as unoriginated First Principle without beginning or end, God is portrayed as a transcendent monad—one as one, solitary unity without distinctions or intervals. The Logos of God is also monad, but in a different way. The Son becomes an interesting point of both connection and distinction between one and many—the one as all things. In the Son Clement has a monadic transition from one to many, incorporated with his understanding of *apocatastasis* as a return from many to one. The role of the Holy Spirit is intimately correlated with this process. The Holy Spirit, as the co-educator with Christ, is the unifying principle of soteriological significance. Metaphysical unfolding of trinitarian interrelation serves in Clement, in my opinion, as a principle of unity and a vehicle of the return from many to one, to the harmonious unity of the universe, and provides a unifying and deifying human cosmic identity.

My second essay, "Basil of Caesarea and the Cappadocians on the Distinction Between Essence and Energies in God and Its Relevance to the Deification Theme," is predominantly a critical response to the

Neopalamite argument that we should view Basil of Caesarea and the Cappadocian Fathers as precursors of the Palamite distinction between divine essence and divine energies. After a brief overview of Palamism and particular emphasis on the essence/energy distinction in Neopalamism, as well as the importance of this distinction for Eastern Orthodox understanding of deification, I discuss claims proposed to sanction this distinction as a normative element of Cappadocian theology. Then I review the role of *energeia* in the Cappadocian trinitarian discourse and their general application of *energeia* terminology. The final part of my essay deals with the importance of the notion of participation in God for the Cappadocians in the context of divine essential incomprehensibility and human theosis.

While not necessarily denying the theological legitimacy of this distinction for Gregory Palamas and subsequent development of Eastern Orthodox theology, to see in Basil and the Cappadocians the articulation of this distinction is not only anachronistic, but also misleading. Properly situated in the context of the fourth-century Christian theology and anti-Eunomian polemics the Cappadocian limited evidence for the support of the essence/energies distinction is, at best, inconclusive, but more likely accidental. Even in Basil's *Ep*. 234.1, the key text for the evidence of this distinction, this distinction is only conceptual, with very limited application for human epistemological and contemplative realization of the divine reality. If, for Palamas, the essence/energies distinction is a characteristic of real authenticity within God, in the case of the Cappadocians we can only speak about the cognitive differentiation between the essence and energies that refers to a human's earthly ability to know God, but not to the divine reality itself.

Joel Elowsky in his essay, "Bridging the Gap: Theosis in Antioch and Alexandria," analyzes the difference between Theodore of Mopsuestia, a key representative of the Antiochene approach to Scripture, and Cyril of Alexandria, who represents the zenith of Alexandrian interpretation, in their treatment of theosis. Preceding trends in christology, anthropology, terminology, and exegetical approach informed by the differing Christian cultures of Alexandria and Antioch demonstrate a marked influence on the commentaries on the Gospel of John of Cyril of Alexandria and Theodore of Mopsuestia. Their exposition and commentary of Jesus' words, "That they may be one," in John 17 in particular reflect an approach to the text that is focused on our union with God and secondarily on our union with one another—the exact opposite

of how this passage is interpreted in most contemporary ecumenical discussions.

Theodore of Mopsuestia interprets this union in terms of a conjunction, or connection between the human and divine in Christ and between human beings and the Father. Such a union is at heart relational, reflecting Antiochene two-subject christology expressed in a single person, although the Greek word Theodore used was *prosōpon*. Alexandria understands the union with the Father to entail not just an association or relationship, but essentially a deification of the human nature that "well-nigh" transforms it into another nature. Cyril speaks of Christ in terms of a single subject as God and Man in the one Nature of God the Word. In Elowsky's opinion, Theodore and Cyril offer two contrasting approaches to deification: the acceptance of theosis by Alexandria along with the visceral rejection of theosis by Antioch, that reflect, in many ways the contemporary tendencies of Protestants and other Western churches in contrast to the churches of the East.

Paul Collins' first essay, "Theosis, Texts and Identity: the *Philokalia* (1782) a Case Study," investigates the construal of the doctrine of deification in the context of the framing of Orthodox identity in the twentieth century in relation to the reception of the *Philokalia*. He begins with an examination of imperatives, which led to the publication of the *Philokalia* in 1782, and of the rationale, which the editors Makarios and Nikodimos provide for its publication; and then he reviews the reception of the *Philokalia* in Russia during the course of the nineteenth century. Further, Collins discusses how the use of the *Philokalia* by Russian Orthodox theologians who emigrated to the West after the Bolshevik revolution informed these constructs. The *Philokalia* as a "canon" of the hesychast tradition and the doctrine of deification, in his assessment, produces a "hermeneutical filter," which has formed and informed a Neopalamite construal of modern Orthodox identity.

Collins' second essay, "Between Creation and Salvation: Theosis and Theurgy," explores the potential to construct an understanding of "Christian Theurgy" as the expression and means of deification, which provides the basis for a synthesis of the doctrines of creation and salvation. This construction Collins develops over five steps. Firstly, he discusses the reasons for the polarization of the doctrines of creation and salvation in mainstream Western theological discourse. Secondly, he investigates the sacraments of baptism and Eucharist as instances in

which created matter is used to celebrate the salvation of the cosmos. In the third section, he draws on Bulgakov's construal of a theurgic understanding of theology in which "God only reaches us through the liturgical invocations latent in all human creative bringing forth of the unanticipated."[23] In the fourth section, Collins draws together the sacramental understanding of matter with Bulgakov's understanding of theurgy to establish the grounds for understanding the sacraments as instances in which the divine purposes of creating and redeeming suggest the deification of the cosmos. Finally, he draws out the implications, which emerge from this construction of a theurgic understanding of theosis, in which doctrinal construals of creation and salvation are brought together in synthesis.

Mark Medley in his essay, "Participation in God: The Appropriation of Theosis by Contemporary Baptist Theologians," offers a detailed assessment of several modern Baptist theologians who, by applying the concept of theosis, have challenged the common contemporary Baptist approach to salvation as a transactional, immediate, voluntary, individual moment of conversion. If in North American Baptist theology salvation has been understood, for the most part, in such a way as to overemphasize justification, where justification is conceptualized as a legal-forensic remedying of the defective human condition through the atoning death of Christ—Clark H. Pinnock, Stanley J. Grenz, Paul S. Fiddes, and Doug Harink proffer an understanding of salvation as participation in God. These four Baptist theologians do not develop their own approaches to theosis, rather they thematically appeal to the broad soteriological significance of the deification theme, especially as it is represented in Eastern Orthodox theology.

Medley describes how: (i) Pinnock appropriates theosis in developing a pneumatic soteriology; (ii) Grenz appeals to deification to extend insights in trinitarian theology to anthropology in order to offer a vision of theological personhood as ecclesial selfhood in terms of participation in God in Christ through the Spirit; (iii) Fiddes constructively turns to theosis as he offers a Baptist interpretation of the ancient dictum "no salvation outside the church," and he appeals to the concept in his ongoing development of a theology of participation in God; and (iv) Harink, in his theological commentary on 1 & 2 Peter, considers the meaning of "sharing in the divine nature" (2 Pet 1:4) and the connection

23. Milbank, "Sophiology and Theurgy," 36; see Bulgakov, "Unfading Light," 149–59.

of this unique New Testament phrase to living the virtuous life and to the glimpse of humanity's eschatological existence in the transfiguration of Jesus in 2 Peter.

While soteriological concerns are important to these Baptist theologians, theosis also assists their thinking about theological anthropology, ecclesiology, and pneumatology. Their thematic appropriation of theosis corroborates the continued development of a more truly "catholic" theology among Baptists. Engagement with theosis, according to Medley, also has the potential to release Baptist theology to expand its reflection on christology, on the one hand, by turning to a "new" source for theological reflection, Orthodox theology, and, on the other hand, by giving due attention to the transfiguration of Jesus.

By offering in this volume both historical and innovative approaches to the deification theme, we hope that the significance of this issue of Christian theology can provide not only a refreshing, but also a constructive perspective on Christian spirituality and practice. The theological complexity of theosis should not be underestimated. However, we hope that the essentially scriptural, soteriological, trinitarian, christological, anthropological, ecclesial, metaphysical, and ontological importance of the deification theme can help to view cultural and denominational theologies in a new and unifying way as the common ground that transcends boundaries and divisions.

1

Deification in Jesus' Teaching

Stephen Finlan

It is beyond dispute that a major theme in patristic thought was the deification of believers, their taking on of divine character. It is *almost* beyond dispute that deification is also a major theme in the Pauline literature, where believers will be "conformed to the image of his Son" (Rom 8:29), "transformed into the same image" (2 Cor 3:18).[1] There is much less data on deification in the traditions of the sayings of Jesus, but the theme *is* present in key passages in Matthew, Luke, and John, and is subtly suggested in Mark.

There are three particularly vivid deification passages in the Gospels:

> The kingdom of God is within you.
> Luke 17:21 NIV, KJV (but default translation is NRSV)
>
> Be perfect, therefore, as your heavenly Father is perfect.
> Matt 5:48 NRSV
>
> Is it not written in your law, "I said, you are gods"?
> John 10:34

Deification Sayings in the Gospels

The Luke text indicates an indwelling divine potential; the Matthew text suggests continuous transformation into God-likeness; the John text seems to intend the divinization of believers. Mark lacks any unmistakable divinization reference, but profound transformation is certainly

1. See Finlan, "Can We Speak?" 68–80.

suggested in the records of people doing the will of God, becoming Jesus' brothers and sisters, receiving healing as divine "power," and seeing the kingdom of God "come with power" (Mark 3:35; 5:30; 9:1). Still, the absence of explicit deification statements makes Mark (not John) the anomaly among the canonical Gospels. John's harmony with Matthew and Luke in this matter causes difficulty for standard biblical scholarship, which is wont to isolate John and discount its possible historicity. This does not mean that we should reject scholarship, only that we should be attentive to the actual *content* of the sayings, and be prepared to encounter some surprises.

We will begin with Luke's kingdom-within, move to Matthew's perfect-like-God, to John's you-are-gods and other remarks, and then to some suggestive passages in Mark.

The first thing to notice about the three sayings quoted above is how shocking they are. They evoke amazement, stimulating reflection. To appreciate *any* of these deification statements requires a willingness to depart from all the arid interpretations that would suffocate the creativity of first-hand religious living. To appreciate Jesus' sayings demands that one abandon all standardized theologies—Jewish or Christian—and to reject as well the lifeless skepticism that sometimes taints academic discourse. The endeavor to explain Jesus sociologically and to deny any originality to his sayings is an attempt to stifle his, and their, revolutionary import. We must allow them to be as extraordinary as they seem.

The Kingdom Within

Luke 17:21 says that the kingdom is not here nor there (not outwardly located), but "the kingdom of God is within [ἐντός] you" (NIV, KJV, ASV, TEV, NRSV margin). The translation of ἐντός will be addressed shortly. First we must notice that this saying draws our attention to the "kingdom of God," the main symbol utilized by Jesus in his teaching. Scholars have long recognized more than one dimension to this concept. A nineteenth-century discussion brought out two sides to the kingdom idea: individual and social. One writer says the kingdom idea refers "primarily to the realization of a relationship between the individual soul and God," but the "social result is essential to the realization

of the kingdom of God."[2] Another claims the kingdom "is a state of loyalty to God," which Jesus can describe in connection with the individual or with "the community, as in the prayer: 'Thy kingdom come; Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven.'"[3]

One does not always find such a balanced approach. Scholarship is engaged in a pendulum swing against any emphasis on the individual and any notion of a kingdom within. This extreme anti-individualism has led to a bland and misleading translation of ἐντός in Luke 17:21: "the kingdom of God is among you" (NRSV, NAB, NJB).

The correct translation of ἐντός, "within," occurs in KJV, NIV, and ASV, but the trend in the last seventy years has been to undermine the intention of this saying by refusing to allow ἐντός to have its usual meaning, instead insisting on giving it a social meaning, starting with RSV translating it as "in the midst of." NAB translates it "among," as does NRSV, but the latter provides the marginal alternate, "within." NIV reverses this choice, preferring "within," and giving "among" in the margin.

I suspect that the attempt to socialize, suffocate, and domesticate this saying arises from an anti-personalist and materialistic bias. Some scholars insist the saying *can only* be social, that the kingdom *must* refer to the social circle around Jesus. Why must it? Is it because the persons offering this interpretation have lost faith in the notion of creative and spiritual power within the individual (within themselves)? Have they bought wholly into the notion that people are nothing but products of their environment?

C. H. Dodd rightly defends "within" for ἐντός, which is "a strengthened form of ἐν used where it is important to exclude any of the possible meanings of that preposition other than 'inside' . . . When Luke means 'among', he says ἐν μέσῳ."[4]

Colin Roberts takes a middle position. He recognizes "within" as the correct translation of ἐντός, dismantling the attempt to derive "among" from two Xenophon passages, arguing for the meaning "within" or "within the limits of."[5] Roberts sees Luke 17:21 intending

2. Rush Rhees, in Abbott et al., "The Kingdom of God," 12–13.
3. Lyman Abbott, in ibid., 12.
4. Dodd, *Parables*, 84 n.1.
5. Roberts, "Kingdom," 3, 6.

both internal and external meanings. The kingdom is "a present reality, but only if you wish it to be so"; it is not "something external to men, independent of their volitions and actions"; elsewhere, the kingdom can be received, sought, or possessed.[6] A weaker form of this view is given by J. C. O'Neill, for whom the kingdom-within means "the responsibility for doing what God required actually lay within their own grasp."[7] These are correct, as far as they go, but they do not go far enough; they underestimate the forcefulness of the single-word object; the kingdom is within "*you*," not merely "within your power, your choice." Do people have decision-making power? Of course, but this unremarkable point is not the punch line of one of Jesus' most vivid sayings. What *is* it that they would be choosing, except to experience God's reign in their own lives? This is the whole import of Jesus' teaching, and it is obtainable by any person! A point that should follow from Roberts's and O'Neill's emphasis on free choice is that it is largely a message directed at individuals—not that any contrast is being made between individual and group. Verse 21 uses both the grammatically singular imperative "look!" (ἰδού) and the plural pronoun "you" (ὑμῶν).

The point is that people have the inward or spiritual capacity to experience God's kingdom, although some readers resist this suggestion, since the saying is addressed to Jesus' enemies, the Pharisees. It is precisely this fact that testifies to its genuineness: it is too radical for doctrinaire people to handle, including latter-day scribes who are sure that Jesus *cannot* have made the kingdom so readily available, even to Pharisees! But it makes sense both that the historical Jesus said it, and that the author Luke recorded it, since it is consistent with the message (in *all* the Gospels) that the kingdom is available to all, and because Luke includes more positive portraits of Pharisees than the other evangelists.[8] What is stunning about this passage is that Jesus says the kingdom is *already resident* within people. It may not yet be *realized*, but it is "within" you.

Some analysts think the "within you" notion sounds Gnostic, and reject it for that reason. But this is anachronistic and distorting. The Gospel was written prior to the sharp division between Gnostics and orthodox, before the Gnostics made some of his sayings their favorites,

6. Ibid., 8; e.g. Luke 12:31; 18:16; Mark 10:15; Matt 13:45.

7. O'Neill, "Kingdom," 141.

8. Luke 11:37; 13:31; Acts 5:34–39; 15:5; 23:6–9.

and the orthodox made others determinative. There is no reason that Jesus could not have said something that later hearers think sounds "Gnostic," any more than it is impossible for Jesus to have said something that later hearers will pronounce "Catholic-sounding" or "Protestant-seeming," even though he spoke them centuries before these church divisions emerged. A supposedly Gnostic-sounding saying in no way implies an endorsement of later-articulated Gnostic doctrines about cosmic corruption, a hidden Father, or the body as a tomb of the soul.

Other critics allege that Luke 17:21 cannot mean that the kingdom is internal, that such a notion occurs nowhere else in the Gospels. This overlooks the closely related idea of being filled with the Holy Spirit, which is central to Luke's two works. The Spirit comes upon the disciples (Acts 1:8), it *fills* them (Luke 1:15, 41, 67; 12:12; Acts 2:17; 4:8) and speaks the word of God through them (Acts 2:4; 4:31). In fact, the Spirit spoke through David and the prophets (Luke 1:70; Acts 1:16; 4:25; 28:25). To be "full of the Spirit" is to be "full of grace and power" (Acts 6:3, 8), able to prophesy (Luke 1:67; Acts 2:18), even to see the "glory of God" (Acts 7:55). These teachings about the motivating power of the Spirit are just one place to look for hints of Luke's received tradition about the kingdom. One could look further into the thinking and feeling aspects of faith, and their relation to action.

The exhortation to *look within* would logically mean that people should look for evidence of God's activity within their minds, their values, and their religious experience. In the canonical Gospels, Jesus never over-emphasizes one of these three at the expense of the other two. One is to love God with mind, heart (one's deepest values), and soul (which manifests in action). The notion of a *kingdom within* does not speak of an imbalance in the spiritual life, but of a profound balance between thinking, feeling, and doing. One *thinks* about the will of God, *hungers* and yearns for God, and *does* the will of God (Matt 5:6; 7:21; 21:31; Luke 8:21; 10:27).

Inwardness is important in all the Synoptic Gospels. What characterizes a person is the "treasure" or "light"—or "evil"—*within* (Luke 6:45; 11:35–36; Matt 6:23; 12:34–35; Mark 7:15, 20). "Treasure" refers to one's deepest desires and values, and spiritual desire shapes destiny: "Where your treasure is, there your heart will be also" (Luke 12:34). We are to seek "treasure in heaven" (Luke 12:33; 18:22; Matt 6:20; 19:21; Mark 10:21).

A divine indwelling also occurs in John: Jesus is *within* the believer: "I abide in you"; "I in them"; "the love . . . in them" (John 15:4; 17:23; 17:26). "The Spirit of Truth . . . will be in you" (John 14:17). All these sayings use ἐν, a preposition related to ἐντός, as do passages in the Johannine and Pauline epistles that speak of Christ within (1 John 3:24; 4:13; Rom 8:10; Gal 2:20; Col 1:27; 3:11). This inwardness has profound results. All the streams of the NT teach that people can "discern what is the will of God" (Rom 12:2; cf. Col 1:9; Eph 5:17; Jas 1:25), and then actually "do the will of God" (John 7:17); in fact, a follower of Jesus is *defined* as "whoever does the will of God" (Mark 3:35; cf. Matt 7:21; 12:50). One acts out of the treasure of the heart, and that *can* be "good treasure" (Matt 12:35; Luke 6:45).

Despite the emphasis of many theologians, the historical Jesus was not pessimistic about human nature. People can actually love God "with all your heart" (Luke 10:27). People can be "pure in heart" (Matt 5:8). The Johannine tradition does emphasize a certain inwardness of spiritual experience—"The Holy Spirit . . . will teach you everything" (John 14:26; cf. 1 John 2:27)—but the Spirit-within is a central Lukan and Pauline theme, and *doing* the will of God is a central Matthean and Markan theme.

The Apostle Paul certainly has a concept of inwardness: "our inner nature is being renewed day by day" (2 Cor 4:16). The believer has the "mind of Christ" (1 Cor 2:16); the transformed mind discerns the will of God (Rom 12:2). In fact, we will "be conformed to the image of his Son" (Rom 8:29; cf. Phil 3:21; 1 Cor 15:49), and will be "transformed into the same image" (2 Cor 3:18; cf. Col 3:10). For teachings on transformation, the Pauline literature is the richest in the NT, yet we see them elsewhere as well: we "may become participants of the divine nature" (2 Pet 1:4; cf. 5:4); "we will be like him" (1 John 3:2); "will shine like the sun" (Matt 13:43); and "stand without blemish" (Jude 24).

The notion of an indwelling divinity, or at least a capacity for individual perception of divinity, is not alien to the OT, either. "The human spirit is the lamp of the Lord, searching every inmost part" (Prov 20:27). "Truly it is the spirit in a mortal, the breath of the Almighty, that makes for understanding" (Job 32:8). The Lord spoke to Elijah as "a still small voice" (1 Kgs 19:12 RSV). These theological points suggest an anthropological one: "There is something divine in man, or he could know

nothing of God."[9] The notion that people have God-receptive capacities or spiritual faculties, often called "natural theology," is a time-honored thread in Christian thought, though often attacked.

Still, the kingdom is not separable from Christ. The NT affirms Christ as not only the revealer, but the bringer, of the kingdom. His healings and exorcisms reveal the kingdom: "if it is by the Spirit of God that I cast out demons, then the kingdom of God has come to you" (Matt 12:28; cf. Luke 11:20). Many scholars who resist the notion of an inward kingdom will allow that such texts—and not just the "eternal life" passages in John—speak of "realized eschatology," the kingdom present here and now. The Synoptics affirm that the kingdom is "near" (Matt 3:2; Mark 1:15; Luke 10:9).

Jesus means several things by "the kingdom of God": something that will come "with power" and will be "seen" by people (Mark 9:1), something that grows dramatically yet without our control (Mark 4:26–32), the company of the faithful in the afterlife (Matt 21:31), something that exists in a community (Matt 21:43), and—Yes!—something that exists within each believer (Luke 17:21, and many mentions of having "light" or "love" or "treasure" within, to being pure in heart or loving God with all one's heart).

Be Perfect

For anyone who worships God and thinks of the character of God as embodying all value, "be perfect, therefore, as your heavenly Father is perfect" (Matt 5:48) is a command to take on the divine character. Aspiring for the divine nature is declared a legitimate goal, although it may be a goal that is never fully reached, a goal that perennially draws us on—in which case, "be perfect" would signify "be ever-perfecting."

The saying should astound us. Here, at the end of the first section of the Sermon on the Mount, perfection is *commanded*. By commanding perfection, Jesus suggests the necessity—and possibility—of human transformation, a profound correcting of that which is imperfect, even within this lifetime. This causes enormous difficulties for theologians who assume that all humans are thoroughly depraved and sinful, even after being saved. The verse is equally painful for secularizing critics who want to de-fang it, to suppress the suggestion of divinization. Many

9. Bradford, *Age of Faith*, 31.

scholars want to see the saying as referring to a perfecting of discipleship. This is legitimate, but not if it is used to stifle the transcendent aspect. How could a command to become like "your heavenly Father" *not* have a transcendent meaning?

At the very least, the saying indicates that God has a plan for perfecting people, in synchrony with earlier hopes about "God who fulfills his purpose for me . . . The Lord will fulfill his purpose for me" (Ps 57:2; 138:8). God *yearns* to complete what he has started: "you would long for the work of your hands" (Job 14:15). The perfection saying promises the fulfillment of God's aspirations for us, as much as of our aspirations toward God. If there is an answer to our spiritual longings for understanding, reconciliation, and communion, surely there is also an answer to the Father's intention to make us part of a heavenly family; his will *is* done in heaven (Matt 6:10). Deification may be hinted at here and elsewhere in Matt 6: "your Father who sees in secret will reward you . . . Store up for yourselves treasures in heaven . . . your whole body will be full of light . . . will he not much more clothe you—you of little faith?" (6:6, 18, 20, 22, 30). Rewards, treasures, light, and being "clothed"—might these not speak of transformations that await us?

One question that has preoccupied exegetes is the meaning of τέλειος. "Perfect" is the most common translation, but "complete," "mature," and "whole" are possible. In *what sense* are believers to be perfect or complete? Perfect in devotion? In wisdom? In love? It soon becomes apparent that these questions will need to be examined in light of the passage in which it occurs. Should it be treated as the summarizing statement of the first section (chapter) of the Sermon on the Mount, or as the culmination of a shorter passage (Matt 5:38–48) that speaks of loving one's enemies (5:44) and of being children of God (5:45)?

Let us treat the immediate context first. The saying culminates the instruction on self-giving that precedes it. Sonship with God is made *conditional* upon forgiving one's enemies (Matt 5:44–45). One must *do* something. Turning the other cheek and carrying someone's burden another mile (Matt 5:39, 41) are acts of spiritual *aggression*; they are not passive, but are profoundly confrontational, in a spiritual manner. Dropping the desire for "an eye for an eye," actually praying and wishing well for one's persecutors (Matt 5:38; 44), is very difficult to do, but you do it "so that you may be children of your Father in heaven" (5:45). Presumably this has an evangelical motive: to convert the persecutor,

turn the Saul into a Paul, causing the centurion to notice that one is "a son of God" (Matt 27:54, NRSV margin[10]).

The immediate context, then, speaks of selfless love, non-retaliation, and being children of God. The bigger context of Matthew 5–6 speaks of hungering for truth, being "pure in heart" (5:8—something that is *possible*, then), shining light upon the world, exceeding a Pharisaic righteousness, avoiding anger, not praying bombastically, praying for God's will, being full of light, not loving money, and trusting God. It is a sermon about wholehearted sincerity, forgiveness, service, trust, and humility. If we look at the *larger* context, perfection seems to refer to *these* values of trust in God and kindness toward all, while the *immediate* context narrows this down to the ethics of nonviolence and love, even of enemies. Both of these are consistent with the emphasis on honesty and good works that one finds throughout the Gospel of Matthew.

Scholars have often been consumed with questions of verbal tense and mood in Matt 5:48. The verb ἔσεσθε is a future indicative, middle voice. Is it intended to function as a future (in which case, it should have been translated "you will be perfect") or is it functioning as present imperative (as the future indicative often does)? This one is fairly easy to answer. All the main verbs in vv. 39–42 are imperatives, and the indicatives in the verses that follow are all expressing support for the imperatives of those verses: "For if you love those who love you, what reward do you have?" (v. 46)—implying, "go further, love your enemies." The force of verse 48, then, is imperative: "Be perfect, therefore, as your heavenly Father is perfect" (NRSV).

It seems to be based on some Leviticus passages: "be holy, for I am holy"; or "be holy, for I the Lord your God am holy" (Lev 11:44, 45; 19:2; cf. 20:26). In Leviticus, the original meaning of "holy" (separate, numinous, divine, and dangerous) still holds. The commands in Leviticus are given to Moses or to Moses and Aaron, and transmitted from them to the Israelites. Holiness in Leviticus has both a ritual and a moral side. Jesus, in Matthew, avoids this word that has so much ritual history, using instead τέλειος, a word that is usually associated with maturation, completion, even *beauty*. The context in Matthew suggests that the ethical implications of maturity are being emphasized.

10. This is the best translation of *huios theou* without the article. Further, a Roman soldier would be more likely to speak of "*a* son of God" than of a unique "God's Son."

One author insists that the saying involves "a command for the present . . . be perfect now."[11] But that would rightly be called "perfectionism," an attitude characterized by judgmentalism and impatience with others, something that is inconsistent with the canonical portrait of Jesus, who values people's motivations and hunger for truth.[12] A perfectionist would hardly be known for spending time with tax collectors and sinners, winebibbers and (former) prostitutes. In Jesus' day, a perfectionist would be known for ceremonial hand-washings, fasting, and other such external observances, instead of being known for rejecting those usages[13] and emphasizing what comes from within.[14] Therefore, it is misleading to say "Jesus will be satisfied with nothing but the highest ideal,"[15] since we see that he includes people who have a less-than-perfect ideal, yet who will not "lose their reward" (Matt 10:41–42; cf. Mark 9:38–41; Luke 10:39–42). Jesus is definitely not a perfectionist, in the sense of being rigidly moralistic or insisting that things can only be done one way. He constantly shows attention to the "little people," people with little faith, people who are not particularly "religious" in any socially-recognized way (the woman at the well, the tax collector in the tree, the shunned woman), but who come to him for spiritual waters.

He is delighted when some needy people dismantle the roof above his head while he is in the middle of a sermon. No perfectionist could tolerate this. This shows that what matters for Jesus is not our spiritual level but our spiritual *direction*, not our proximity to perfection but our *desire* for it. He grants forgiveness to the paralyzed man and his friends who lowered him down through the roof because he recognizes their spirituality—"Jesus saw their faith" (Mark 2:5; Matt 9:2)—and he responds to their motivation—"Take heart, son; your sins are forgiven" (Matt 9:2).

Spiritual desire, direction, and motive are more relevant to the perfection quest than are one's actual achievements or outward and apparent "perfection." You will go to God if you *want* to go to God.

11. Harper, "Be Perfect," 244.
12. Matt 5:6; 6:33; John 6:27.
13. Matt 9:11–13; 11:19; 21:31.
14. Matt 23:26–28; 15:18; Mark 7:15–23.
15. Harper, "Be Perfect," 244.

The reader may be frustrated with the absence of a concrete answer to the question "what, exactly, is this perfection? What is its content?" This is often the case with the gospel: we are given a taste, offered a principle, pointed in the right direction, but the full disclosure of its content is only found in one's personal experience. The whole gospel message suggests that perfecting includes a maturation of character, a thorough inculcation of honesty, and a motive of kindness directed at service to others. Matt 5:48 summarizes this as becoming more like the heavenly Father. This saying is not a departure from, but a fulfillment of, the rest of the Lord's teaching as found in the New Testament.

We found that the Lukan saying of a kingdom within draws attention to God's activity within the believer's mind, values ("treasure"), and experience. Matt 5:48 goes further, implying the perfecting of behavior, character, and faithfulness. The Lukan passage alerts us to where it all begins, the Matthean passage tells us where it all is headed.

You are gods

John 10:34–35, where Jesus quotes a psalm that says "you are gods" and affirms that this is said of "those to whom the word of God came," needs to be considered contextually. Jesus is being challenged for claiming to have divine power, and his comeback is to draw attention to a unique and startling passage in the OT that seems to say that *people* have divinity, can even be called *elohim*, "gods" (translating literally). Many hundreds of years before Jesus, when the psalm was composed, the *elohim* were an "an assembly of gods" over whom Yahweh ruled.[16] This would not, however, be the view of Jesus or of any first century Jew. He may have had the notion of a council of angels or heavenly beings who assist the Lord, but that is not relevant here, because Psalm 82 and John 10 both refer to *humans* in connection with *elohim*.

More relevant than the antique history of *elohim* would be the views of the midrashim (closer to Jesus' time) on this passage, so we turn to Jerome Neyrey's study of midrashic comments on Psalm 82. The midrashic authors understood *elohim* to refer to deathlessness and holiness. God wanted to give deathlessness to the Israelites ("that the Angel of Death should have no dominion over them"[17]), but they lost

16. Albertz, *History of Israelite Religion*, 132.

17. *Abodah Zarah* 5a. Neyrey says "Israel could be called *god* because *deathless*" (Neyrey, "'I Said: You Are Gods,'" 656)

this offer by sinning: "you have corrupted your conduct: '*SURELY YE SHALL DIE LIKE MEN*' (Ps 82:7)."[18] Although the midrashim understand God to be speaking the words of the psalm at Sinai, the "doctrine of the relation of sin and death" that underlies it comes from Gen 1–3; it is Adam who was deathless and holy, and who lost this status when he sinned.[19] Neyrey sees the Johannine Jesus assuming the Sinai setting, as well. "Those to whom the word of God came" (John 10:35) refers to the Exodus generation. Neyrey thinks that, for Jesus as for the midrashim, holiness implied deathlessness. Holiness provides "the ground for calling someone, Israel or Jesus, *god*."[20] Further, deathlessness is an essential teaching in John: "anyone who hears my word and believes him who sent me has eternal life" (John 5:24).

Neyrey's analysis illuminates some aspects of this passage quite well. The application of *elohim* to human beings ceases to be incomprehensible when it is understood as a label for people who receive the divine quality of deathlessness. In John, Jesus always had that divine quality; he was with God in the beginning, and was in fact the co-creator of "all things" (John 1:1–3).

But, while Neyrey demonstrates a midrashic connection of the *elohim* label to deathlessness, and discusses the Christology of 10:36 (the one sent by God is divine), he cannot connect these two points—because they are not connected in *this* passage, even though deathlessness is a major Johannine teaching. In John 10, people are not called *elohim* because of deathlessness. Jesus' point is much more bold; he is making a *divinity* connection. When he connects "those to whom the word of God came were called 'gods'" to the "one whom the Father has sanctified and sent" (10:35–36), he is using a lesser-to-greater argument: if even they to whom God spoke could be called gods, how much *more* can the one actually *sent by God* be called "Son of God"? These are assertions of different levels of divinity, and behind them lie some important statements about *revelation*.

A reason for divinity is given for each side of the pair. *They* were called divine because the Word of God came to them; their proximity to the self-revealing God enabled them to be called *elohim*. It is the Son's divine *sentness* that qualifies him for divinity. This does not im-

18. *Mekilta Bahodesh* 9; Neyrey, "'I Said: You Are Gods,'" 655. Same point in *Num. Rab.* 16:24.

19. Neyrey, "'I Said: You Are Gods,'" 657–58.

20. Ibid., 659.

ply sentness for the Exodus people, just the opposite. If they could be called divine (who were *not* sent, but only had the Word of God sent to them), how much more could the one who *was* sent be called divine? Revelation occurs on both sides of the comparison.

While the deathlessness connection is intriguing, it is marginal for *this* passage. Revelation makes the connection between the two parties who can be called *elohim*. The one sent by God to be the Revealer is certainly divine, but the people who received revelation could also legitimately be called *elohim*. What is the content of revelation, but divinity, God-quality? The Revealer is already divine, while the people receiving revelation are *divinized*, transformed. This notion is reflected in the OT, as well. Moses' face shone, as a result of being "with the Lord" and writing down the Lord's commandments (Exod 34:28–30, 35; 2 Cor 3:13). All of this implies that the people who listen to the Son may also be called *elohim*.

Divinization and the Sonship of Believers

Of course, scholars have recognized a strong Christology in John 10:30–36, but they underestimate the passage's boldness when they overlook the deification teaching (however brief) that the people who received the Sinai revelation could be called *elohim*. This is a deification teaching: the action of God transforms humans. This transformation can be described as being or becoming children of God: "See what love the Father has given us, that we should be called children of God; and that is what we are" (1 John 3:1). Unknown transformations are still to come (1 John 3:2). Matthew is the exception in saying sonship with God is achievable through selfless love (Matt 5:41–45, just preceding the perfection mandate). Most NT authors who speak of sonship refer to it as a new status: "in Christ you are all children of God . . . no longer a slave but a child" (Gal 3:26; 4:7). For Paul, "the freedom of the glory of the children of God" changes creation itself (Rom 8:21); sonship causes the removal of class and sex divisions (Gal 3:26–28; cf. Rom 9:24–26).

In John, sonship is not just a status, but a "power": "To all who received him . . . he gave power to become children of God" (John 1:12). Faith has transformed believers into children of God, and this was God's doing (John 1:13). The same teaching is probably implicit in John 10:34. The psalm that Jesus is quoting says, "You are gods, children of

the Most High, all of you" (Ps 82:6). Although the reference to children or sons [*huioi*] is elided in John, the words of the original text would have resonated in the minds of many hearers or readers. And if they read on in the Gospel, they would find that Jesus came to "gather into one the dispersed children of God" (John 11:52).

No single passage in John affirms divinization to the same degree as 10:34–36, but a series of later passages can be seen to suggest, or at least *allow*, divinization, starting with the promise "that where I am, there you may be also," and that "the one who believes in me will also do the works that I do and, in fact, will do greater works than these" (14:3, 12). Not ontology, but works, are emphasized, but it certainly is suggestive, especially if linked with some later promises: "The Spirit of truth . . . will be in you" (14:17); "The Spirit of truth . . . will guide you into all the truth" (16:13). "If you ask anything of the Father in my name, he will give it to you" (16:23). "As you, Father, are in me and I am in you, may they also be in us . . . The glory that you have given me I have given them, so that they may be one, as we are one" (17:21–22). What is the sequence of deification themes seen here?

- those who received revelation in the past could be called *elohim*;
- those who receive revelation from me will do greater works than I have done;
- they will have the Spirit of Truth and will be guided into all truth;
- they will receive spiritual things for which they ask, will receive God's and Jesus' glory, and will have spiritual unity.

This adds up to the instruction, empowerment, glorification, and divinizing of believers—what the church will later refer to as theosis. In fact, theosis has never been separable from Christology. It is *because* the divine Word came into flesh, that mortals can be deified.[21] His "life was the light of all people . . . The true light, which enlightens everyone" (John 1:4, 9). "The Son gives life" (John 5:21). For John, Jesus *is* light and life, and he imparts "the fullness of the knowledge of God." [22]

21. A principle strongly affirmed by the church fathers Irenaeus and Athanasius. See the articles "Irenaeus on the Christological Basis of Human Divinization" and "Athanasius on the Deifying Work of the Redeemer" by Jeffrey Finch in the collection *Theōsis*, 86–121.

22. Russell, *Doctrine of Deification*, 88.

Applying theosis to the Exodus generation may seem inconsistent with the teaching that theosis is derived from Christ, but it ceases to be so if Jesus is saying that *he* was the source of the Israelites' theosis—and he may be implying just that, when he says "'I said, you are gods'" (10:34). Instead of the Hebrew text's "I say," the Johannine Jesus uses the aorist form "I said," apparently identifying himself as the one who spoke to the Israelites in the past. Elsewhere he affirms, "Before Abraham was, I am" (8:58). He had divine glory before the world began (1:1; 17:5, 24). Of course, it is Paul, not John, who specifically places Christ in the Exodus, as the rock that led them in the wilderness (1 Cor 10:4; the rock is a Talmudic expansion of Num 14:14; 20:11), but the idea is not completely alien to John's thinking. John's preferred focus is to have Jesus fulfill the meanings of Hebrew festivals: he is the new Passover; he, not the water of Siloam ceremonially poured on the altar, is the water of life; he, in contrast to the torches burning around the temple area,[23] is the light of the world (John 1:29; 7:2, 37–38; 8:12). All this implies that Jesus lay behind the symbols, unrecognized.

The Rhetoric of Revelation

Now it is necessary to take a step back from the exegesis of Johannine texts, and speculate about why the historical Jesus might have said these things, or something similar. Here we find a similar pattern in all four Gospels. There are many stories in the Synoptics in which Jesus, in response to ill-willed criticisms, will come back with surprising exegesis of the Scriptures that suggests new ideas. He may use a Scripture to refute the theology of his opponents, as when he cites the familiar "the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob" to show the Sadducees that God is "God not of the dead, but of the living" (Mark 12:26–27). He will respond to a Sabbath-breaking accusation by citing a story that shows David breaking the Sabbath, and cap it with the radical saying, "The Sabbath was made for humankind, and not humankind for the Sabbath" (Mark 2:25–27). He will co-join two Scriptures to make a stunning statement about God's openness to the Gentiles, and opposition to commerce in the Temple: "Is it not written, 'My house shall be called a house of prayer for all the nations'? But you have made it a

23. Candelabra and torches were lit on the last day of Sukkoth, the Feast of Tabernacles (Smith, *Days of His Flesh*, 339).

den of robbers" (Mark 11:17; cf. Isa 56:7; Jer 7:11). On every one of these occasions he says something that goes against or goes beyond the theology of his foes. Affirming the "you are gods" passage in the psalms does so, as well.

Whether he is quoting Scriptures or not, Jesus makes his most astonishing theological statements either to selfish people, to those who are openly hostile to him, or to friends who misunderstand him. To his selfish family, interrupting his sermon, sending up notice that they are present, implying that he should pay them some homage, he makes the stunning reply "Whoever does the will of God is my brother and sister and mother" (Mark 3:35). To the hostile Pharisees he says "the kingdom of God is within you" (Luke 17:21 NIV)—even within his enemies! To the clueless Apostle Philip who asks to be shown the Father, he says, "Whoever has seen me has seen the Father" (John 14:9). So when he quotes a psalm that calls some people gods (or *engodded*), it is in the same provocative and instructive spirit as these other responses. In every case he conveys a teaching. What else can it mean when humans are called *elohim*, than that they are taking on (some) divine qualities—being transformed?

Taking on Power; Theosis Themes in Mark

In the last two paragraphs we quoted radical and humanitarian sayings of Jesus in Mark. There is no single theosis passage in Mark that compares with the three from the other Gospels, but there are many passages in Mark that support the possibility of a theosis-teaching. One place where this is seen is in the healing stories. In all the Synoptics, the healings involve a bestowal of divine life and an access to divine power. People are made whole by their faith. In each of the seven instances where Jesus says, "your faith has made you well" or "your faith has saved you,"[24] the verb is in the perfect tense, meaning that their faith has *already* saved them. Perfect tense refers to an action *in the past* with continuing effect in the present. The verb σώζω can be translated "save," "make well," or "make whole." In these seven passages it occurs in the perfect tense, σέσωκεν. Your *existing* faith, persisting in the present, has saved you.

24. Mark 5:34; 10:52; Matt 9:22; Luke 7:50; 8:48; 17:19; 18:42.

The recipients of healing are receiving divine power from Jesus. We see this in Luke: "All in the crowd were trying to touch him, for power came out from him and healed all of them" (Luke 6:19). We see the spreading of divine power in Mark as well: People who follow him around, or who know he is coming to their town, are healed by just touching "the fringe of his cloak" (Mark 6:56). When the hemorrhaging woman secretly touches his cloak, Jesus is "aware that power had gone forth from him" (Mark 5:30; similarly in Luke 8:46). There are theosis implications to this reception of divine power.

The coming of divine power is promised in this: "there are some standing here who will not taste death until they see that the kingdom of God has come with power" (Mark 9:1). Since this is followed by the Transfiguration, it may refer to Jesus' own power, but it could also refer to the manifestation of divine power in the lives of believers. People who are touched by him are changed (Mark 1:41; 8:22; 9:27). The import of these, and even of passages where people refuse to be changed, is that contact with Jesus should bring about profound change, moving people to do the will of God, restoring a person's sanity, turning proud people into servants of others (3:35; 5:15–19; 9:35; 10:43). Mark keeps his focus on Jesus, but the implication is that discipleship brings a powerful life-change.

Theosis in Thomas *and* Mary

There is room for a glance at *The Gospel of Thomas* here, to see if it can shed light on Luke 17:21, and/or on the historical Jesus. *The Gospel of Thomas* is a semi-independent source. Some of its material is independent of the Synoptic Gospels, but most of it seems to be derived from the Synoptics. The Greek copyists of *Thomas* knew the nomina sacra, the standard abbreviations for "Jesus," "God," "Father" and "human,"[25] and they knew the *contents* of Christian texts as well. For instance, there is considerable material resembling Mark 4 in *Thomas* Sayings 5, 6, 9, 20, and 21; while the Sermon on the Mount is echoed closely in Sayings 24, 26, 32, 33, 34, and 36.

We have already said that the idea of divinity within persons does not "belong" to the Gnostics. It should not be surrendered by the orthodox, any more than the ideas of revelation, illumination, or

25. Grenfell and Hunt, *ΛΟΓΙΑ ΙΗCΟΥ*, 7.

transformation should be abandoned, just because they happen to be honored by Gnostics. In fact, the sharp distinction between orthodox and Gnostic belongs to a period later than the composition of the earliest gospels—of which *Thomas* is one, with roots that may go back to the first century CE.

The Gospel of Thomas moves in a gnosticizing direction, but it would be misleading to suggest that it fits wholly into a Gnostic box, having no overlap with the canonical Gospels. There is considerable intersection of ideas between *Thomas* and the Synoptic Gospels, as well as considerable difference. To be honest about both points (overlap and distinction) *Thomas* is more accurately labeled "protognostic" or "gnosticizing," than "Gnostic." Even someone who calls it a Gnostic work, recognizes that *Thomas* might include "genuine early tradition" from the historical Jesus.[26]

Sayings 3 and 113 in *Thomas* are clearly related to Luke 17:21. We start with Saying 3 (from the Coptic): "The Kingdom is inside of you, and it is outside of you. When you come to know yourselves . . . you will realize that it is you who are the sons of the living Father."[27] The Coptic text of *Thomas* has only "kingdom" or "kingdom of the Father," never "kingdom of God," but the phrase "of God" was probably present in the older Greek text at this point, although Papyrus Oxy. 654 is damaged. It reads "And the kingdom [of God] is within you, [and outside]": καὶ ἡ βασ[ιλεία τοῦ θεοῦ] ἐντὸς ὑμῶν [ἐσ]τι [κἀκτός].[28] Thus ἐντὸς ὑμῶν, "within you," is preserved, though *Thomas* adds "and outside you." This addition reduces the focus on inwardness. We see a similar passage shortly later: "when you make the inner as the outer and the outer as the inner and the above as the below, and when you make the male and the female into a single one . . . then shall you enter the kingdom" (Saying 22).[29] Mystics often assert the unity of heavenly and earthly, inward and outward, rejecting commonly accepted distinctions as unenlightened. This "unitive mysticism"[30] is typical of *Thomas*, but is not evident in the canonical Jesus.

26. Puech, "Gnostic Gospels," 294.

27. Thomas Lambdin's translation, published in Cameron, *The Other Gospels*.

28. Robinson et al., *Critical Edition of Q*, 498; Layton, *Nag Hammadi Codex II, 2–7*, 114.

29. Puech, "Gnostic Gospels," 298.

30. Turner, "Theology of Gospel of Thomas," 105.

Saying 113 also preserves a version of Luke 17:21: "The kingdom of the Father is spread out upon the earth, and people do not see it."[31] This shifts attention away from the *inwardness* of the kingdom, and toward people's *ignorance* of the spiritual possibilities within and amongst them. This reflects the common Gnostic theme of the ignorance of ordinary people and their religions. Rather, the locus of enlightenment lies with "the solitary one" (16, 49, 75). Again, the views seem to be more those of "Thomas" than of Jesus.

Of the three versions of the "kingdom within" saying, Luke 17 is the one that preserves *inwardness* most vividly; *Thomas* 3 diverts the message toward a mystical sameness of inner and outer. The emphasis in *Thomas* 113 is on the kingdom as "spread out," and people as ignorant. Clearly, then, gnosticizing texts do not always have more inwardness than orthodox texts. These two Thomasine sayings move away from an emphasis on inwardness.

The most interesting inward-focused saying comes about as far away as it can get, sequentially, from the other two sayings: "That which you have will save you if you bring it forth from yourselves. That which you do not have within you will kill you if you do not have it within you" (Saying 70).[32] Although lacking the optimism of Luke 17:21, it is intriguing, is not necessarily Gnostic, and offers more promise for reflection about what the historical Jesus might have said, than do Sayings 3 and 113.

The kingdom-within saying proceeds quite far along a gnosticizing trajectory in the third century. Hippolytus reports a version that adds this at the end: "For there, hiding in the fourteenth aeon, I am revealed."[33] This reflects the Valentinian concept of the aeons: divine beings, part of the collective Godhead, the Pleroma. *Thomas* has "the All" (Saying 67) but neither "the Pleroma" nor aeons.[34]

The Gospel of Mary has Jesus warning his inner circle to watch out for those who say "'Lo here' or 'Lo there.' For the Son of Man is within you."[35] This dissolves the concreteness of Christ, completely internal-

31. Robinson et al., *Critical Edition of Q*, 498.
32. Cameron, *The Other Gospels*, 33.
33. *Refutatio* 5.7.20, from Attridge, "Appendix: The Greek Fragments," 103.
34. Turner, "Theology of the Gospel," 83.
35. *Gos Mary* 4; Luttikhuizen, "Evaluation of Teaching of Jesus," 168 n.22.

izing him, and sounds like other Gnostic claims of personal deification, such as "you have become the . . . Christ."[36] Orthodox believers consider such claims of divinity to be either disproportionate or deranged. For the orthodox, deification never means that one is literally made equal to Christ, only that one takes on Christ-like qualities while still dependent on Christ, who is Lord.

The pattern of variations in the kingdom-within saying, the later ones being more gnosticized than the earlier ones, suggests Luke 17:21 as the initial source, and Gnostic imagination as influencing the later versions. This also indicates that the kingdom within was Jesus' own idea. It was later used by Gnostics—and unfortunately abandoned or explained away by many of the orthodox.

Conclusion

Suggestions of the deification or divinizing of believers are found not only in a vivid Lukan saying on the kingdom within, a Matthean text commanding perfection (or *perfecting*), and a Johannine reference to people divinized by contact with revelation, but also in many texts that speak of the Spirit within, and of lives transformed by contact with Jesus. Further hints of divinization may be present in Markan records of people being "made whole" (Mark 5:34; 10:52 KJV) by faith, of Jesus imparting divine "power," and of the kingdom of God coming "with power" (5:30; 9:1). Even more deification statements appear in the epistles.

All these sayings need to be considered within the context of the particular works in which they appear, but the teaching of the historical Jesus does seem to have provided the central concept. Before a NT author wrote that believers "may become participants of the divine nature" (2 Pet 1:4), Jesus had already linked divinity with humans, spoken of a kingdom within, and mandated the quest for Father-like perfection.[37] The Synoptic Gospels affirm that Jesus announced that the kingdom "has come," and that those who do the will of God are Jesus' brothers and sisters (Mark 1:15; 3:35; Matt 12:28, 50; Luke 8:21; 11:20).

36. *Gos. Phil.* 38; Layton, *Gnostic Scriptures*, 337.

37. On the theme of imitation of God in 2 Pet 1:4, see Starr, *Sharers in Divine Nature*, 117, 165, 231, and throughout.

Transformation is strongly indicated in John: to all who believed, "he gave power to become children of God," and they "will do greater works than these" (John 1:12; 14:12). This could be called the Christification of believers, as also in the letter: "when he is revealed, we will be like him" (1 John 3:2). How could anyone even approach this, unless divinized—transformed in character and attributes—by following Jesus? Even if human divinization can only be partial and limited, it comes from the transforming touch of God, and is a foretaste of more change to come (Phil 1:6; 3:21).

Regarding this teaching, the believer can use the test that Jesus recommended for all teachings: "Anyone who resolves to do the will of God will know whether the teaching is from God or whether I am speaking on my own" (John 7:17).

2

The Idea of Deification in the Early Eastern Church[1]

Ivan V. Popov

Translated by Boris Jakim

The idea of deification (θεοποίησις, θέωσις), which is completely forgotten in contemporary theology, constituted the very kernel of the religious life of the Christian East. This idea left its mark on all the manifestations of church thought and Christian morality, as well as on devotion and cult. The present essay will be devoted to an attempt to clarify the essence and significance of the idea of deification in its two chief forms.

The religious hopes of the Christian East express very precisely the following soteriological formulas: "God became a human being in order that the human being could become god"; "the Son of God became the Son of Man in order that the sons of man could become the sons of God";[2] "the Lord took upon Himself what is ours and, by offering it in

1. First published in Russian, Ivan Popov, "Ideia obozhenia v drevne-vostochnoi tserkvi" *Voprosy filosofii i psikhologii* 97 (1906) 165–213; republished as separate edition in Moscow, 1909.

2. Irenaeus, *Haer.* 3.10.2, PG 7:873 (Russ. trans. by P. Preobrazhensky, St.-Pb, 1900, 240). Cf. Athanasius, *De Inc. et c. Ar.* 8, PG 26:996 (Russ. trans. MDA, 2nd ed., 1902–1903, Vol. 3, 257). Since Popov often cites Patristic sources in Russian translation, in the interests of a smooth and accurate transmission of his thought, the translator made the decision to translate Patristic quotes from Russian rather than going back to the original languages each time. The references to Russian editions are indicated in parentheses.—Trans.

sacrifice, destroyed it and clothed us in what is His";[3] "even as the Lord, having been clothed in flesh, became man, so we, men, assumed by the Word, are deified (θεοποιούμεθα) for the sake of His flesh";[4] "the man below (Jesus) became God after He was united with God and became one with Him, because that which is better triumphed in order that I could be a god to the extent He became man."[5] For the contemporary ear, such expressions sound very pretentious, but in the language of ancient peoples the word "God" did not have that absolute significance with which it is used by us. Holy Scripture calls Moses a god in relation to pharaoh (Exod 4:16; 7:1); Moses also commands that a servant who refuses his right to be set free on the seventh year be brought before the "gods,"[6] i.e., before an assembly of judges, where the servant's decision will be legally formalized (Exod 21:1–6). In Psalm 82 we find the words that served as the biblical basis for the doctrine expressed by the soteriological formulas presented above: "God has taken his place in the divine council; in the midst of the gods [the judges of Israel] he holds judgment: 'How long will you judge unjustly, and show partiality to the wicked?' . . . I say, 'You are gods, children of the Most High, all of you; nevertheless, you shall die like mortals, and fall like any prince.'"[7] This word was used in a similar sense in the literature and life of the nations of classical antiquity, and public opinion did not find anything scandalous or unusual in the fact, for example, that Domitian's decrees were issued with the thunderous heading: "*dominus ac deus noster Domitianus sic fieri jubet* (our lord and god Domitian commands that it be thus)."

The patristic literature retains this usage for a long time period of time. Gregory the Theologian says that a benefactor becomes a god for those who are needy because he imitates God's mercy.[8] According to the words of the same father of the church, the high vocation of the pastor

3. Athanasius, *Ep. Epict*. 6, PG 26:1060–61 (Russ. trans. Part 3, 296).

4. Athanasius, *Ar.* 3.34, PG 26:397 (Russ. trans. Part 2, 324).

5. Gregory of Nazianzus, *Or*. 29.19, PG 36:100 (Russ. trans: Works, 3rd ed, Moscow, 1889, vol. 3, 59). Cf. Iraneaus, *Haer.* 5. *Praefatio*, PG 7:1119; 5.30.3, PG 7:1205; Gregory of Nazianzus, *Or*. 1.5, PG 35:397 (Russ. trans. Vol. 1, 4–5); Dionysius the Areopagite, *EH* 2.2.1, PG 3:393.

6. Popov is using the Russian translation of the Bible.—Trans.

7. Unless otherwise indicated, the New Revised Standard Version is used throughout the translation of this essay.—Trans.

8. Gregory of Nazianzus, *Or*. 14.26, PG 35:892.

consists of "being a god and making us into gods."[9] Thus, in that epoch, "to become a god" did not mean to grow to the grandeur of the Absolute and to be elevated to the boundlessness of his perfections. The concept of god was thought to necessarily include only immortality, bliss, and superhuman fullness and intensity of life.

The fundamental trait of the religious hopes expressed in the soteriology of the early Eastern Church was the yearning for physical renewal through participation in the Divine nature. The ideal of moral perfection was, of course, not thereby excluded, but personal holiness was viewed partly as a condition, and partly as a result, of the transformation of human nature by Divine power. However, this idea of deification, common to all eastern patristic literature, was not understood by everyone in the same way.

In its religious life, every nation usually consists of several strata. The refined conceptions of Dostoevsky, Khomiakov, and Solovyov, the products of school theology, and the old woman trudging along with a satchel on her back to a miracle-working raka[10]—these are different modes of understanding one and the same symbol. It could not be otherwise in Byzantium, too. Already, at the end of the second century, the religious yearnings of the Eastern Church took two essentially different forms, identical in their fundamental idea, but differing in the concrete interpretation of this idea. In spite of the way these forms were distinctively highlighted in different dogmatic systems, they did not exclude one another and, illuminating the same object (though from different sides), they were easily compatible in one and the same consciousness. But for convenience of exposition, it is necessary to examine these two forms separately.

In the church literature the first orientation is represented by the works of the early writers of Asia Minor, and then by the works of Irenaeus, Athanasius of Alexandria, and Cyril of Alexandria, and by the remnants of the Monophysite literature. The second orientation was expressed in the works of Clement of Alexandria, Origen, the Cappadocians, Pseudo-Dionysius, and Maximus the Confessor. The first orientation was rooted in the very depths of the popular faith, always positive and palpable; the second—which characterized the

9. Gregory of Nazianzus, *Or*. 2.73, PG 35:481.

10. A raised tomb containing the relics of a saint. It is usually placed in a church in such a way as to make the relics convenient for the veneration of the faithful.—Trans.

more educated theologians—was clothed in philosophical forms and did not reject the better aspects of Neoplatonism, which in that epoch dominated all minds and attracted all hearts. Solidified in the densified atmosphere of the valleys, the first orientation was distinguished by the crudeness of its notions, by a concreteness of imagery, by well-defined tendencies. The second orientation, soaring in the rarefied atmosphere of the immaterial, valued most of all the abstract and was lost in the indeterminacy of sweet forebodings. The starting point for the first was the deified flesh of Christ, while the starting point of the second was the Christian doctrine of God in its Neoplatonic version. Therefore, we will call the first orientation the realistic form of the idea of deification, and we will call the second orientation its idealistic form.

I. The Realistic Form of the Idea of Deification

Turning now to an analysis of the realistic form of the idea of deification, we will attempt to clarify the essence and significance of this idea in the history of dogmas.

A.

In order to correctly understand the essence of the religious yearnings that we have mentioned, it is necessary to keep in mind that at the basis of the transformation of human nature these yearnings posited the physical union of God with the souls and bodies of those saved. The thought of the ancients never knew the sharp distinction that exists in the contemporary consciousness between the concepts of spirit and matter. For the thought of the ancients, spirit is merely matter that is extremely subtle and rarefied. Until he was thirty-one-years old, Augustine could not imagine anything that did not have extension; he could not imagine a space unoccupied by anything and conceived God in the form of a subtle ethereal substance diffused over the entire universe.[11] This tendency was most clearly expressed in the materialistic system of the Stoics. Not admitting the existence of anything incorporeal except space, time, and thought, these philosophers attributed corporeality not just to essences but also to all properties. The quality of an object is the peculiar intensity of the pneumatic matter that belongs to it, a matter

11. Augustine, *Conf.* 7.1, PL 32:733 (Russ. trans. KDA. K, 1880–1908, Vol. 1, 155–58).

which flows like a current from the center to the periphery and returns from the periphery to the center. Since every object has many qualities, it was necessary to explain how these qualities, like material fluids, could be combined in one and the same body. The answer to this question was found in the Stoics' doctrine regarding different modes of the combination of materials. The terms used in this doctrine—παράθεσις, σύγχυσις, μῖξις, κρᾶσις—had strictly defined meanings.

Παράθεσις is the touching of bodies by their external surfaces, such as we find in a measure of grain in which beans and grains are mixed. Σύγχυσις resembles the modern concept of a chemical compound. This term was used to designate a combination of two materials in which these materials, mutually permeating each other, undergo a change in their essence and properties and form a third material which does not resemble its components. By contrast, κρᾶσις and μῖξις designated (if we translate them into modern terms) the mechanical mixing of materials in a liquid solution, and were characterized by two features. First, the union of two bodies in this case was regarded as so close that every particle of one of the bodies was thought to be paired with a particle of the other body. It was even supposed that, in the case of the mixing of materials in unequal proportions, the material that is lesser in a quantitative respect diffuses over the entire extent of the material that is greater. A drop of wine, having spilled into the sea and having dissolved in it, expands to the extreme limits of the sea. Secondly, even though two bodies interpenetrate each other so deeply, they nonetheless preserve unchanged their essence and their properties. Examples of such interpenetration are the union of fire and metal in molten iron and the union of soul and body in man.[12]

These concepts and terms of the Stoics were widely used in the patristic literature. It was on the basis of such concepts that the church writers conceived the union of spirit and matter, of grace and the material of the sacraments, and of God and the flesh, calling this union mixing (μῖξις) or dissolving (κρᾶσις). Tertullian most resembled the Stoics in this respect. Inspired by the materialism of this philosophical school, this is what he writes in his treatise *On Baptism*: "A material that occupies a lower position assimilates with natural necessity the properties of a thing that is situated above it. In particular, all that is material is

12. Zeller, *Philosophie Griechen*, 3.2:106–18, especially 115. Anm. 2. Cf. Harnack, *Lehrbuch Dogmengeschichte*, 2:359–60.

capable of assimilating the properties of the spiritual, because, thanks to the subtlety of its substance, the latter easily permeates the former. And now, during baptism, after the invocation, the Holy Spirit immediately descends and, remaining above the water, sanctifies it out of Himself, and the water, sanctified in this manner, itself absorbs (*combibunt*) into itself the power of sanctifying."[13] Tertullian fully adopted the Stoics' concepts, but in this respect he was an exception. The Stoics' materialism in conceiving the mode of the union of God and the human being was foreign to other church writers, but, without accepting the Stoics' terms in their strict sense, these writers nonetheless conceived this union according to the Stoics' schema. On the one hand, aspiring to realize in their consciousness the idea of the physical union of God and the human being, and on the other hand, preserving the concept of the spirituality of Divinity, these writers employed the images of mixing and dissolving, but they accompanied these images with either an explicit or implicit qualification, which expunged from them their crudely sensuous, material meaning.[14]

There can be no doubt that Origen had a precise understanding of the spirituality of God and of the Logos, and understood it to mean, not subtle materiality, but something wholly opposite to matter as extended and divisible being; however, this did not prevent him from conceiving the relation of the Divinity of the Logos to the Divinity of the Father on the basis of the material schema of mixing. The Logos is God according to participation, because "He was the first, as a result of abiding with God, to absorb into Himself from the Godhead of the Father." On his

13. Tertullian. *Bapt*. 4, PL 1:1311–12. We encounter a similar crude representation of the relation between grace and the material of the sacraments in the popular orations of Eastern writers. "Look attentively," says Cyril of Jerusalem, "at the baptismal font: look upon it not as simple water but as spiritual grace offered together with the water. For just as that which is offered on the altar, being simple by its nature, can be fouled by the invocation of demons, so, conversely, when the Holy Spirit, Christ, and the Father are invoked upon simple water, it receives the power of holiness" (Cyril of Jerusalem, *Catech*. 2.3, PG 33:385 [Russ. trans. MDA. 2nd ed. 1893, 37]); "the holy myrrh after invocation is no longer simple or (as some might say) ordinary myrrh; rather, it is a gift of Christ and of the Holy Spirit, from the presence of whose Divinity it has become effectual" (Cyril of Jerusalem, *Myst*. 3.3, PG 33:1089 [Russ. trans., 290]).

14. Such, for example, is the terminology of Gregory of Nazianzus and Gregory of Nyssa. See Holl, *Amphilochius von Ikonium*, 189–90, 226–27.

part, he deifies other gods, without envy communicating to them the Godhead that he drew for himself from the Father.[15]

Basil the Great had a similar strict notion of the spirit, but he conceived the relation of the Holy Spirit to the nature of the angels on the basis of the same schema: "All that is sanctified is sanctified only by the presence of the Spirit. Thus, the angels are summoned into existence by the Creative Word—by the Creator of all things, while sanctification is communicated to them by the Holy Spirit. For the angels were not created as infants who would later become worthy of receiving the spirit, but into the original composition and, so to speak, solution of their essence was placed holiness. Therefore, they do not have a tendency to sin precisely because they are at once covered with sanctification as with a certain composition."[16] It is in this way that Basil the Great explains, among other things, the possibility of the fall of the angels. Their nature is complex. It consists of their essence and of the holiness communicated by the Spirit. This holiness, which is received from outside, can be squandered by them. In contrast to the angels, sin is impossible for the Holy Spirit, because in him essence and holiness coincide, are one and the same thing.[17] Thus, the basis of deification is the physical union of God with human nature, and this union is similar to mixing or dissolving.

Such a close union of God and the human being first took place in the person of the Redeemer. The Son of God, after incarnation, permeated with his pneumatic nature all the fibers and curves of the soul and body of the man Jesus assumed by him. In such an interdissolution of the two natures, opposite in their qualities and incommensurable in their power, it was natural that the properties of the weaker nature had to disappear, as it were: the human properties had to fade in the radiance of Divinity. In the same way, a chunk of dark and cold iron, when it is thrown into a red-hot furnace, absorbs the fire into all its pores, and our senses stop perceiving in it the properties of a metal but apprehend only the light and heat from the fire.[18]

15. Origen, *Com. Jn*. 2.2, PG 14:107.

16. Basil of Caesarea, *Hom. Ps*. 32.6, PG 29:333 (Russ. trans. MDA. 3rd ed., Moscow, 1891, Vol. 1, 224).

17. Basil of Caesarea, *Ep*. 8.10, PG 32:261–64 (Russ. trans. Vol. 6, 37–38). This letter is attributed to Evagrius Ponticus.—Ed.

18. Origen, *Princ*. 2.6.6, PG 11:213 (Russ. trans. KDA. 1899, 132–33). From the time

Even in the state of his original purity, the human being is weak and has a tendency to sin, but God communicated his holiness and power to Jesus, and consequently Christ was incapable of sin.[19] The human being does not have power over demons; he cannot heal sicknesses or work miracles. God, in the person of the Redeemer, using his body as the instrument, expelled demons, raised the dead, and walked on the waters.[20] Summoned out of the abyss of nonbeing, eternally gliding over this abyss, always on the verge of plunging again into nothingness, the human being, in his body, bears corruption as some sort of poisonous principle. God is being itself, life itself. Having united himself with the man Jesus, God abolished in Jesus' body the principle of corruption and communicated to Jesus his own immortality. "Christ's body, clothed in the incorporeal Word of God, no longer fears death or corruption, because its garment is life."[21] "God molded together this holy body, as it were, and ineffably placed into it His own radiance and incorruptibility."[22] Therefore, if Christ died, it was only because it was pleasing to the Divine Logos to distance himself from his body for a time, but death could not hold in its power this temple of life itself, and the man assumed by God rose on the third day and won the definitive victory over the last enemy of life—death.[23]

Obedient to the law of development, Christ's human nature was gradually permeated by divine properties.[24] When he is an infant, no one suspects that he is God. When he is eleven, he astonishes the doctors and the elders with his wisdom. Then the Apostle Peter recognizes in him the Son of God, and following Peter the other disciples see this as well.[25] On Tabor, streams of divine glory flow through the garments

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of Origen the Stoics' image of iron and fire becomes the traditional image in the patristic literature for explaining the mode of union of the two natures in Christ.

19. Athanasius, *Ar.* 1.51 and 60, PG 26:117–19, 137 (Russ trans. Part 2, 243, 255).

20. Ibid., 3.31, PG 26:389 (Russ trans. Part 2, 409). Dionysius the Areopagite, *Ep*. 4, PG 3:1072.

21. Athanasius, *De Inc*. 44, PG 25:173–76 (Russ. trans. Part 1, 248–49).

22. Cyril of Alexandria, *Ador*. 9, PG 68:597 (Russ trans. MDA. Moscow, 1880–1912. Part 1, 131).

23. Athanasius, *Ar.* 3.57, PG 26:444 (Russ. trans. Part 2, 440–41); *De Inc*. 31, PG 25:149 (Russ. trans. Part 1, 231).

24. Ibid., 3.53, PG 26:436 (Russ. trans. Part 2, 435).

25. Ibid., 3.52, PG 26:432–33 (Russ. trans. Part 2, 433–34).

of flesh, for God is light. "Even His garments Christ showed to be white as light, because out of the entire body of the Savior there flowed the glory of His Divinity and His light shone in all His members."[26] After the resurrection, not everyone could see with physical eyes the spiritualized body of the Savior entering through closed doors. After the ascension, Christ's humanity becomes an object of worship for the angels, and now this humanity itself, and not just in the capacity of an instrument, becomes life-giving and acquires the ability to work miracles. "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me" (Matt 28:18), says the humanity in the ascension.[27] This humanity now occupies its seat at the right hand of the glory of the Most High and, preserving its bodily contours, it shines with divine light as on Tabor.[28]

Gregory of Nyssa went farther than this church doctrine. "After the Resurrection of Christ," he says, "His flesh, while remaining by nature flesh, was transformed into a sea of incorruptibility and all that was human was changed into the divine and immortal nature; there remained in it neither weight, nor appearance, nor color, nor hardness, nor softness, nor height."[29] Using an analogy favored by the Stoics, Gregory compares Christ's humanity with a drop of vinegar poured into the sea and expanding to the extreme limits of its immeasurable extent: like the drop of vinegar in the sea, the Savior's humanity dissolves in his Divinity.[30]

The idea of the deification of Christ's human nature as a result of its union with Divinity received its most extreme expression in

26. Ephrem the Syrian, *Or*. 32 (Russ. trans. MDA. 5th ed. Sergiev Posad, 1907–1914. Part 2, 52). The whole Transfiguration liturgy is based on this idea: "Thou wast transfigured and hast made the nature that had grown dark in Adam shine again, transforming it into the glory and radiance of Thy Divinity" (2nd dismissal sticheron). ["Dismissal stichera" are also called "apostichera," "stichera aposticha," or "aposticha stichera." They are sung at the end of Vespers.—Ed.] That the light that was seen on Tabor is a manifestation of the very nature of Divinity is clearly expressed in the canon of Cosmas: "Being God the Word, thou hast become totally earthly, mixing the humanity into all the Divinity in Thy hypostasis which Moses and Elijah saw on Mount Tabor in the two natures."

27. Athanasius, *Ar.* 1.42, PG 26:97–99 (Russ. trans. Part 2, 231–32); 3.38, PG 26:405 (Russ. trans. Part 2, 418); 3.40, PG 26:409 (Russ. trans. Part 2, 420–21); 3.43, PG 26:416 (Russ. trans. Part 2, 424); 3.48, PG 26:424–25 (Russ. trans. Part 2, 429–30).

28. Gregory of Nazianzus, *Ep*. 101, *ad Cleodinium*, PG 37:181.

29. Gregory of Nysssa, *Antirrh*. 42, PG 45:1224.

30. Gregory of Nysssa, *Ad Theoph*., PG 45:1276.

the doctrine of the most consistent and irreconcilable Monophysites, at whose head stood Julian Halicarnassus (these were the so-called Aphthartodocetists, or Phantasiasts). They asserted that, already from the very instant of the union of God with the man Jesus, i.e., from the instant of Jesus' conception, the Redeemer's body, by virtue of the hypostatic immortality dwelling in it, underwent such profound changes that it stopped being consubstantial with the human body and became incorruptible and alien to all that is logically connected with the concept of mortality and corruption, i.e., growth, metabolism, and decay. Thus, the blood of the God-Man was not like earthly and decaying human blood, but was transformed into divine blood, unearthly and incorruptible. Immortality and unchangeability were the natural state for Christ's deified body, and the manifestations of mortality were only an abstract possibility. Therefore, if Christ experienced hunger, suffered, and died, this was an act of his own will and a miracle which the Redeemer worked in order to share the fate of those for whose salvation he had come. In this doctrine we are dealing with the logic of an idea that does not wish to take into account the historical documents which Christianity has in the Gospels.[31]

But Christ is the head of the renewed humanity. In his person Divinity was united not with Jesus alone but with the whole human race, and therefore those redeemed by him will attain a similar glory.

Christ poured out the Holy Spirit on the faithful, and by his very essence the Holy Spirit dissolves into their souls and bodies. This physical union is distinguished from incarnation only by the fact that, in this union, the human *I* preserves its independence and does not merge with the Holy Spirit to become one person and one consciousness with the Spirit. Therefore, this union is designated by the same terms of mixing and dissolving; the same analogy of fire and iron serves to illustrate it.[32] "He who is united with the Lord is not only spiritual or holy, but he is one spirit with the Lord. He has entered into a solution with Divinity (ἀνεκράθη) and become one with God.[33]

31. Harnack, *Lehrbuch Dogmengeschichte*, 2:386–87; Junglas, *Leontius von Byzanz*, 102–3; Troitsky, *Izlozhenie*, 139–64; Giesseler, *Commentationis*.

32. Cyril of Alexandria, *Ador*. 3, PG 68:297 (Russ. trans. Part 2, 173). Macarius the Egyptian, *Hom*. 4.14, PG 34:481 (Russ. trans. MDA. Moscow, 1880, 39–40).

33. Amphilochius of Iconium, *Fragmenta adversum haereticorum*; Ficker, *Amphilochiana*, 39.

In Macarius of Egypt's conception, the soul's union with God approaches incarnation: "Transfiguring Himself for reasons of compassion and love of humanity, God fructifies Himself (σωματοποιεῖ ἑαυτόν), enters into union (ἀναμίγνυται), assimilates holy souls, and, according to Paul's expression, is one spirit with them."[34] When the Holy Spirit descends on a human being and is united with him so intimately, the latter becomes god-bearing or spirit-bearing, and divine properties are communicated to his nature. By the power of the Holy Spirit he works signs;[35] his mind, supernaturally renewed, sees visions and receives revelations; in himself he perceives the light of Divinity. The Spirit itself works in him the Lord's commandments. The human being's moral disposition becomes pure as crystal, and this is attained effortlessly on his part. Joy, the reflection of the divine bliss, fills his heart. But the redeemed will attain the final and definitive glorification only after the universal resurrection. Christ will pour out the Holy Spirit like rain on the bones falling apart into dust, and the Spirit will communicate to these remains the immortality of its own nature. After the resurrection, the life of the body will finally and definitively leave the sphere of the physical and will be preserved directly by the power of the Holy Spirit. At the present time, to sustain life, the body needs food, shelter, clothing, but after the resurrection, all these needs will be satisfied by the action of the Holy Spirit, permeating the body and communicating to it incorruptibility, immortality, and a glorified, light-bearing appearance.[36]

B.

That is the essence of the hopes which inspired the hearts of large masses of the population of the eastern half of the Christian world. The influence of these yearnings, of these passionate aspirations toward

34. Macarius the Egyptian, *Hom.* 4.9–10, PG 34:480. Cf. Idem., *De elevatio mentis*, 6, PG 34:893 (Russ trans. 36, 406).

35. Ibid., 50.1, PG 34:816; 30.6, PG 34:725.

36. For the materials which serve as the basis of the exposition in the section on the physical transformation of the human nature by the action of the Holy Spirit, see my earlier essays: "*Religioznyi ideal sv. Afanasiya Aleksandriiskogo*" [The Religious Ideal of Athanasius of Alexandria] (Sergiev Posad, 1904), 48–60, 74–94; and "*Misticheskoye opravadanie asketizma v tvoreniakh prep. Makariya Egipetskogo*" [Mystical Justification of Asceticism in the Works of Macarius of Egypt] (Sergiev Posad, 1905), 25–60. Also see: Weigl, *Heilslehre des hl. Cyrill*, 196–201, 296–300, 328, and elsewhere.

immortality and divine glory, was felt during the entire course of the dogmatic disputes, and these yearnings had a tremendous impact on the development of the doctrine of the faith. If the incarnation of the Son of God was a moment in the union of God and humanity, and if the Redeemer's person was the channel through which divine powers descended to the human race and man ascended to God, then in this person it was also necessary to recognize, first of all, the presence of the divine and human natures and, secondly, the intimate union of the two. And we do in fact see that it is precisely from the point of view of the idea of deification that Christian writers polemicized against doctrines that deviated from this requirement.

In the ancient church, the so-called Ebionites saw in Christ a mere man, born of Joseph and Mary and surpassing others only in wisdom and justice.[37] Irenaeus intensely disputes this doctrine. If Christ is not God, then the principle of immortality has not penetrated into our corruptible nature, and we remain mortal as before. "In what way," he exclaims, "will man pass over into God if God has not passed over into man?" "For in no way could we receive incorruptibility and immortality if we were not united with incorruptibility and immortality."[38]

In the fourth-century, Arianism touched upon in the most essential manner the religious yearnings associated with the idea of deification. If an angel-like being, created by God out of nothing, was what was made incarnate in Christ, then how will the human being participate in substantial life? His physical union with God has not yet taken place, and the poisonous principle of mortality remains unchanged in his body. This is the basis of the entire polemic of Athanasius the Great against the Arians. The dominant theme of this polemic is "if the Word, being a creature, had become man, then man would have remained what he was and not have been united with God";[39] "man, having been united with a creature, would not have been deified,"[40] because "a creature could not have united other creatures with God, since it lacked that which unites."[41]

37. Irenaeus, *Haer*. 1.26.1–2, PG 7:686.

38. Ibid., 4.33.4, 3.19.1–2, PG 7:1074, 938.

39. Athanasius, *Ar.* 2.67, PG 26:289 (Russ. trans. Part 2, 350).

40. Ibid., 2.70, PG 26:296 (Russ. trans. Part 2, 353).

41. Ibid., 2.69, PG 26:293 (Russ. trans. Part 2, 352; cf. Part 2, p. 41, PG 26:233; Russ trans. Part 2, 315).

But if, from the point of view of religious hopes, it was necessary to recognize in the person of Jesus Christ the incarnation of God, it was not less consistent to insist also that he had a human nature. By denying the reality of this nature, one lost the link uniting God with the human being. However, for many who were filled with the eastern or Platonic contempt for matter, the idea of incarnation was a stumbling block and seemed unworthy of God. Those who held this opinion asserted that the Son of God had only the appearance of a body, or that he concealed himself beneath a shell woven of pneumatic substance. His real connection with man was thus denied, as was, consequently, the possibility of salvation. This was pointed out by Ignatius of Antioch and Irenaeus. On his via dolorosa to Rome, Ignatius wrote to the churches of Asia Minor: "If Christ suffered in an imaginary manner, then why am I in chains? Why do I desire to fight with wild beasts? If that is the case, I die for nothing."[42] "If the Lord received flesh from another substance," says Irenaeus, "then man is not reconciled with God."[43]

Apollinarius of Laodicea had very weighty reasons, as it appeared to him, to believe that the Son of God assumed only a human body and soul, but not a human mind—the source of consciousness and self-determination. The extent to which this dogmatic theory of the incompleteness of the Redeemer's human nature contradicted soteriology and religious yearnings can be easily seen from the polemic waged against it by Gregory the Theologian, Cyril of Alexandria, and Severus of Antioch. The point of departure for their critique of Apollinarianism was the soteriological axiom that "that which is not assumed is not saved."[44] If not the whole man was united with Divinity, the church writers argued, then that part which was outside the action of Divinity did not receive healing and renewal. But the mind, the initiator of sin and man's guide, has a special need for renewal.[45]

42. Ignatius of Antioch, *Trall*. 10, PG 5:681; *Smyrn*. 4, PG 5:709.

43. Irenaeus, *Haer*. 5.14.3, PG 7:1160.

44. Cyril of Alexandria, *Jn*. 7, PG 74:89.

45. Gregory of Nazianzus, *Ep*. 101, *ad Cleodinium*, PG 37:184, 188; *Poemata de seipso, De vita sua* 610–30, PG 37:1071–72. Cyril of Alexandria says the same thing, based on the principle "that which is not assumed is not saved." The relevant texts are collected in Weigl, *Heilslehre des hl. Cyrill*, 104–105; Anton Rehrmann, *Christologie des hl. Cyrillus*, 35 ff. The same idea is expressed by the followers of Severus of Antioch. See Ahrens, *Sogenannte Kirchengeschichte*, 192.

From the same point of view, it was necessary to recognize in the person of the Redeemer the most intimate and indissoluble union of the two natures, since only in that case could one speak of the communication of divine properties to the human nature. That is why Nestorius' doctrine of the moral union of the Son of God with the man Jesus encountered such unanimous condemnation from the church.

The influence of the idea of deification is not limited to dogmas that have a direct connection with the person of the Redeemer, but goes much further. Here are some facts.

Salvation is effected by the Holy Spirit. It is precisely through the Holy Spirit that God acts in those who are saved. But if the Holy Spirit is, by nature, not God, then he cannot raise the human being above the limits of the creature. This impossibility is stated in the polemic of Athanasius of Alexandria, Basil the Great, and Gregory the Theologian against the pneumatomachi. "I do not believe," says the latter, "in the possibility of being saved through someone equal in dignity to me. If the Holy Spirit is not God, then let Him first become God and then deify me."[46] "If through the participation in the Spirit we become participants in the divine nature, then insane is anyone who asserts that the Spirit has not a divine but a creaturely nature. Even those in whom the Spirit abides are deified by the Spirit. And if the Spirit makes men into gods, there is no doubt that His nature is the nature of God."[47]

The Eucharistic doctrine of many church writers bears the mark of developed soteriological ideas. Through this sacrament the divine principle of immortality is introduced into the human organism. Christ's flesh was the body of Life itself. His flesh became the bearer of powers by which all things are given life and maintained in their existence. Christ touched the dead and through his body communicated life to those who had died. If that which was dead came back to life through the mere touch of deified flesh, then even more effectual is communion with the life-giving Eucharist, assimilated by our whole body. "The Eucharist will transform, "says Cyril of Alexandria, "into its own quality, i.e., into immortality, those who partake of it. When it is heated in a pot, water receives the properties of fire. In the same

46. Gregory of Nazianzus, *Or*. 34.12, PG 36:252.

47. Athansius, *Ep. Serap*. 1.24, PG 26:585–88 (Russ. trans. Part 3, 36). Basil of Caesarea, *Eun*. 3.5, PG 29:665 (Russ. trans. Part 3, 113).

way, by being mixed with true Life, we lose our natural frailty and are transmuted into Life."[48]

Gregory of Nyssa likens the principle of corruption, which permeated man's physical nature after the fall of the first human beings, to a poisonous principle, which penetrated into the body and whose destructive effect can be stopped only by an antidote, which, too, must be injected into the organism. Such an antidote is the Eucharist: "The body given over to death by God, by entering our body, transmutes the whole into itself. Just as when that which is harmful is mixed with that which is healthful the whole mixture becomes useless, so the immortal body, when it abides in that which has received it, transmutes everything into its own nature . . . Therefore it is necessary, by the means possible for nature (i.e., by means of partaking), to receive into oneself the life-giving power of the Spirit."[49]

Beginning in the fourth century with the doctrine of the Virgin Mary, the influence of the set of notions associated with the idea of deification becomes more and more noticeable. The source of the prominence of the Mother of God and of her glorification lies in her totally exclusive physical closeness to the Son of God: she carried him in herself, was his temple and throne, and nourished him and held him in her arms. Consequently, any thought that she is sinful or that her body is corruptible is totally inadmissible, and contradicts all the demands of religious feeling. Just as the dwelling of Divinity in the person of the Redeemer was the cause of the sinlessness and immortality of his humanity, so the abiding of God in the Virgin's womb purged her of sin and preserved uncorrupted her virginity even in the birth, and her body even in death. She who carried Life in herself could not experience corruption: "With the appearance of the sun the eye too is clarified and shines in its light. And Mary is like the eye. Light inhabited her, cleansed her mind, made her thoughts pure, made her cares chaste, sanctified her virginity."[50]

"How could death have swallowed her, who was filled with the action of the Holy Spirit, who was born without sicknesses, who was

48. Cyril of Alexandria, *Jn*. 4.2, PG 73:577–80 (Russ trans. Part 13, 50–52).

49. Gregory of Nyssa, *Or. Cat*. 37, PG 45:93. Cf. Irenaeus, *Haer*. 4.18.5; 5.2.2–3, PG 7:1027, 1124–25; Cyril of Alexandria, *Jn*. 4.2, PG 73:565.

50. Ephrem the Syrian, *Mary and Eve* 2 (Russ. trans. Part 5, 204–5). See his *Or*. 40, "On the Heretics."

wholly united with God?" exclaims John of Damascus in his homily on the Dormition of the Mother of God. "How could corruption have possessed the body that had received Life? This is incongruous with and totally alien to the spirit-bearing soul and body."[51] But, here too, the Monophysites did not refrain from drawing the extreme conclusion that followed from the fundamental proposition of the doctrine of deification. If incorruptibility is a consequence of the physical union of the human being with God, then to the Virgin Mary, they thought, it is necessary to ascribe bodily incorruptibility from the very instant of the God-Man's conception in her womb. Leontius of Byzantium, who informs us of this interesting fact, offers the counterargument to Julian's followers that the birth itself, which is not compatible with the notion of incorruptibility, refutes the doctrine that immortality was communicated to the Mother of God from the instant of the inhabitation in her of the Word of God.[52] The extreme conclusions drawn by the Monophysites from the idea of deification were evidently the death-blow to the realistic understanding of this idea. The terms κρᾶσις and μῖξις, used earlier by authoritative writers of the church but now compromised by heretics, were condemned by the Fourth Ecumenical Council and went out of usage.

"In Christ," writes John of Damascus, formulating the conclusive result of the christological disputes, "are united two perfect natures—divine and human—not through mixing, or merging, or dissolving, or transmuting."[53] The very doctrine of deification is subjected to limitations that were still beyond the horizon of the church writers of the fourth century. Because of this circumstance, the idealistic conception of the idea of deification advanced to the foreground in the church consciousness, and we now turn to a discussion of this conception.

II. The Idealistic Form of the Idea of Deification

In its purest form, we find the idealistic version of the idea of deification in the works attributed to Dionysius the Areopagite. The elements

51. John of Damascus, *Homilia* 2 in *Dormitionem B.V. Mariae* 2–3, PG 96:725–28.

52. Leontius of Byzantium, *Contra nestorianos et eutychianos* 2, PG 86:1325. Cf. Junglas, *Leontius von Byzanz*, 102–3.

53. John of Damascus, *Precise Exposition of the Orthodox Faith*, Russ. trans. Moscow, 1844, 143.

characterizing the first orientation are completely absent in these works. Even though the works of Gregory the Theologian and Gregory of Nyssa are dominated by the idealistic element, they also contain realistic formulas, especially in cases when the focus is on the deification of Christ's humanity and on the universal resurrection.

The idealistic form of the idea of deification is based on the philosophical concept of God shaped under the influence of Neoplatonic philosophy. Therefore, this must be the starting point of our discussion of the idealistic form. Here, there is no need to demonstrate the influence of Neoplatonism by parallels. For the reader familiar with the later systems based on the principles of Platonic philosophy this will be clear from our exposition. It is necessary to make one qualification, though. The Christian concept of God which characterizes the aforementioned writers, and especially Pseudo-Dionysius whose entire system is determined by Proclus' doctrine, is not exhausted by the philosophical elements we intend to discuss. Despite the closeness of these Christian writers to Neoplatonism, their doctrine of God was never identical with that of Neoplatonism, and it never lost its specifically Christian character. For the Neoplatonists God is a physical force not conscious in its inner life and not free in its external self-disclosure. God does not enter into moral and personal relations with human beings. His providence in the world is only a law-conforming connection of causes and effects. Human prayer does not ascend to God, and if it is answered, this is only thanks to the sympathy of parts of the universe that respond with a predetermined echo to conscious changes in the human spirit. In the Christian literature God is always a moral, free, and conscious Person, who in his immeasurable love descends to the needs and sufferings of human nothingness. But in order to clarify the meaning of the idea of deification, we need precisely the Neoplatonic frame of this concept, and so we will briefly touch upon it in the following lines.

God in his essence is unfathomable. He is neither body, nor figure, nor appearance, nor quantity or quality. He is higher than essence, being, bliss, beauty, reason.[54] "He surpasses every property, movement, life, imagination, opinion, name, word, thought, reason, essence, basis, union, boundary, boundlessness, and all that exists."[55] Therefore, one

54. Dionysius the Aregopagte, *DN* 1.1, PG 3:585–88.

55. Ibid., 1.5, PG 3:593; *MT* 4, PG 3:1040.

can say with certainty that, whatever God is, every positive qualification of him has a symbolic character and constitutes a shadow and faint reflection of the reality.[56]

But removed from the world and hidden in his essence, God is nevertheless the Creator of the universe and the goal of all aspirations.

As the Creator, he communicates himself to all things, imprinting on all things his ideas, predeterminations, images. Out of him, as out of the center, onto all nature flow the divine powers: being, goodness, life, beauty, consciousness, unity. They summon things into being and communicate qualitative determinacy to them. Divinity is diffused throughout the whole world. "God in spirits, souls, and bodies, in heaven and on earth, everywhere and in all things is the same. He is in the world, around the world, above the world. He is higher than the heavens and all that exists. He is the sun, the stars, fire, water, the breath of the wind, dew, clouds, stones, cliffs—all that exists and nothing of what exists."[57] He lives and acts in the qualitative determinacy of the world. Therefore, all is full of Divinity; all participates in him, even demons, for they too exist, live, think;[58] even nonbeing, for it too becomes beautiful and good if, as the negation of all that is sensuous, it is thought in God.[59] But things do not contain God to an identical extent. The more perfect, complex, and rich in content a creature is, the more fully it reflects the Creator in itself. Inorganic nature only exists; a plant already lives; an animal not only lives but also feels; and a human being, above that, also possesses reason—that is the ladder of creatures according to the degree of their closeness to God.

Since all being, goodness, beauty, and life originate in God, it follows that all things aspire to preserve or multiply these goods; it follows that, in essence, all things aspire toward God. God is the goal of all aspirations. When it resists the blows of a hammer, a stone defends its existence—an imprint of Divinity—and this expresses its aspiration toward God. A plant struggles not only for its existence but also for its life; an animal is directed toward the First Cause of all things by its ability to feel; while human beings aspire toward God by their will

56. Dionysius the Aregopagte, *DN* 13.3, PG 3:981.

57. Ibid., 1.6, PG 3:596.

58. Ibid., 4.23, PG 3:725.

59. Ibid., 4.7, PG 3:704.

and knowledge.[60] Out of this universal aspiration toward the Source of being there arises the harmony of the universe. Every part of creation, both in itself and in other creatures, loves only the image of God, and this binds the whole universe by ties of mutual attraction. The visible sun is a symbol of God. Our food, clothing, and fuel, our very body, are a transformation of the sun's rays; and all that is alive and feels is drawn in love and joy toward this source of powers.[61]

Thus, the life of the world moves in a circle: God's powers, flowing out of his simple essence, are refracted like rays of light in a prism and are attenuated in intensity with distance from their source, while the multiplicity formed in this way is once again, in its aspiration toward God, gathered into unity.

What is the distinguishing characteristic of this doctrine of God, and what is the relation of this doctrine to the content of Holy Scripture?

If to clarify this question we take as our starting point the ordinary relations among people united by friendship or love, we will easily become convinced that in a beloved person we are attracted either by his physical perfections (talent, intelligence, power, beauty) or by his moral stature. The believing soul's relation to God can be dominated by either of these aspects. The Bible speaks both of the ontological perfections of God as the Creator and Providence and of his moral relations with the chosen nation, but the religious feeling of the prophets was chiefly nourished by ideas of the second type. "When Israel was a child," we read in the book of the prophet Hosea, "I loved him, and out of Egypt I called my son . . . It was I who taught Ephraim to walk, I took them in my arms; but they did not know that I healed them. I led them with cords of human kindness, with bands of love. I was to them like those who lift infants to their cheeks. I bent down to them and fed them . . . [But] my people are bent on turning away from me . . . How can I give you up, Ephraim? . . . My heart recoils within me, my compassion grows warm and tender. I will not execute my fierce anger; I will not again destroy Ephraim: for I am God, and no mortal" (Hos 11:1–9). In these words, which reproduce the fundamental tone of the prophetic writings, we revolve in the sphere of purely moral relations and notions. God is the

60. Ibid., 5.3, PG 3:817.

61. Ibid., 4.4, PG 3:700; 1.5, PG 3:593; 4.10, PG 3:708.

Father, who educates human beings gently; He is the zealous and merciful Judge. Furthermore—and this is very important—all these ideas are directly echoed in the believer's heart.

There is a wholly other spirit in the Areopagite's doctrine of God. This doctrine advances to the foreground the idea of God's creative relation to the world. His concept of God is composed entirely of ontological categories. God is being, beauty, life, unity, likeness, equality, movement. The Areopagite places human religious impulses in the same series as the resistance of the stone to the hammer's blows, as the plant's tenacious grip on life, and as the instinct of self-preservation in animals; he considers these impulses to be a phenomenon of the same order as the others. Among the names of God, to whose explanation the author devotes a special work, there are only two which at first glance can be regarded as having a moral character: justice and peace; but a closer analysis of these concepts clearly shows to what extent the Areopagite tends to transform the moral into the cosmic. God is just because, by preserving unmixed all that is individual, to every kind of being he imparts uniformity, beauty, and symmetry, distributing these qualities in conformity with the dignity of the indivisible and its place in nature.[62] God is peace, because he is the source of the harmony and order of the universe. Into every indivisible he places the aspiration toward self-preservation, i.e., toward peace with itself. He binds everything by the chain of causes, to keep nature from being dispersed into the boundless and indeterminate. As peace, God has placed into our minds the ability to generalize single representations and to compose general concepts out of them.[63] All this has so little ethical content that to use the word "peace" in this sense is to use a metaphor instead of direct speech. Thus, the concept of God which we encounter in the works of Pseudo-Dionysius is distinguished by a cosmic character, and a preponderance in it of the ontological attributes of Divinity, and this predetermines to a significant degree the properties of the religiosity connected with it. We now attempt to clarify this religiosity.

For the Christian writers of the group which interests us now, as well as for writers who are more remote from philosophical influences, salvation consists in deification. Not less than the latter, these writers

62. Ibid., 8.7, PG 3: 893, 896.

63. Ibid., 11.1–3, PG 3:948, 949, 952.

longed to participate in divine life and found oppressive the limits imposed on the human being by the natural order of things. Like the theologians of the realistic orientation, they placed all their hopes on God's grace, which overcomes and recreates nature, and anticipated attaining human's final goal and calling solely through union with God. But it is precisely at this point that the divergence of the two currents begins. For the realistic orientation, participation in divine life was a consequence of the permeation of the soul and body by the divine powers of the Holy Spirit, which permeation was conceived according to the Stoics' schema of the mixing of bodies. For theologians of the idealistic orientation, the point where human nature physically touches Divinity is the mind, which, deified by the participation in God, communicates deification also to the body, over which the mind has mastery. But the parallelism between the incarnation of the Son of God and the deification of the redeemed is preserved here, too.

Origen was the first to clearly formulate this idea. God and the flesh are so different in their essences that without an intermediary it would be impossible for the divine nature to be united with the body. Such an intermediary principle was Christ's human soul, with which the Divine Logos preliminarily entered into hypostatic union. For the soul as the middle substance, it was not unnatural to clothe itself in the body; on the other hand, for it, as the rational substance, it was not unnatural to receive God. Created from all eternity together with the other spirits, Christ's soul, in contrast to other souls, who have fallen away from God to a greater or lesser degree, burned with unchanging love for the Creator, and by its love "inseparably and unalterably abided in Him as in truth and eternal light and, with all its being apprehending the whole Son of God and entering into His light and splendor, became one spirit with Him."[64]

Origen's doctrine (after the excision of the idea of the preexistence of souls) was assimilated into their theological systems by Gregory the Theologian and Gregory of Nyssa, and they did this with a special eagerness, because this doctrine could serve as a very weighty philosophical argument against Apollinarius, who denied the presence of the human mind in the person of Jesus Christ. "God is not unitable with the flesh," writes Gregory the Theologian, "whereas the soul and mind are

64. Origen, *Princ*. 2.6.3, PG 11:211 (Russ. trans. KDA. 1899, 129–30).

something intermediary, because, on the one hand, they live together with the flesh and, on the other hand, they are created in the image of God. Therefore, God's essence, in uniting with that which is kindred to Itself, through this kindred something, entered into communion with the crudeness of flesh."[65] In the same way, the human being is deified through the intermediary of the mind. The mind is like a mirror. If it is directed at God and reflects his beauty, then the body too—this mirror of the mirror—subordinating itself to the mind, bears a reflection of the latter's divine beauty.[66] "I will be a god," says Gregory the Theologian, "when the *soul* enters into union with Divinity."[67] "The task of the soul consists in gradually refining the worst in human nature, in attracting this worst to itself (the soul) and elevating it. By becoming the master of serviceable matter, and transforming this matter into a servant of God, the soul becomes for the body what God is for the soul."[68] With the passage of time this doctrine became the dominant one and was incorporated in the *Precise Exposition of the Orthodox Faith* of John of Damascus, who in this work summed up the development of doctrine in the patristic period. "God inhabits, through the mind, the bodies of saints," he writes.[69]

If Divinity enters into communion with human nature through the intermediary of the mind and the mind is the bearer of freedom, the organ of knowledge and the guide of feeling, this leads to an emphasis on the element of the soul's self-directed activity, which goes out to meet the divine love which is descending to the human being. For Christian thinkers of the idealistic orientation, deification is, first of all, a moral union with God, a likening to his properties; secondly, an intellectual union, that inner unity which is established between the subject of knowledge and the truth, which is the object of knowledge; and thirdly the fusion of two indivisibles in the feeling of mutual love, when the icy barrier separating two self-conscious atoms melts and two

65. Gregory of Nazianzus, *Poemata dogmatica*, 10.59–60, PG 37:469.

66. Gregory of Nyssa, *De opif.* 12, PG 44:161.

67. Gregory of Nazianzus, *Poemata de seipso*, 54.17–18, PG 37:1399.

68. Gregory of Nazianzus, *Or.* 2.17, PG 35:425 (Russ. trans. Part 1, 21). We encounter the same notion in Proclus: "Every body is deified through the deified soul, every soul through the divine mind, every mind through participation in the divine henad." See Koch, *Pseudo-Dionysius Areopagita*, 191.

69. John of Damascus, *De fide orthodoxa* 4.15, PG 94:1164.

persons, having touched each other like droplets of quicksilver, are united as if into one entity. The divine likeness of the morally transformed personality, the ecstasy of mind and the ecstasy of love, is what unites the human being with God.

A.

"He who in his life is likened to the distinguishing characteristics of the Divine nature becomes in some manner the same as the one with whom he revealed a resemblance by an exact likening"[70]—that is the fundamental notion behind the moral element in the idea of deification. Very often the most ordinary exhortations to live a Christian life are clothed in this form. In the year 373, after a series of popular disturbances, the inhabitants of Nazianzus fearfully awaited harsh repressions from the authorities. On this occasion, Gregory the Theologian addressed the governor of the town with the words: "In man the most divine thing is that he can be merciful. You can become a god without sacrificing anything of your property, but simply by showing mercy and forgiveness: do not miss the chance to be deified."[71] A human being permeated with humility, "in becoming like God, is clothed in His blessed image."[72] "He who has become liberated from passions has become higher than man and transformed according to nature into the divine."[73] "The holiness and purity of virginity are deifying in some manner, making human beings participants in the glory of the one truly holy and immaculate God."[74] He who forgives his brother's sins "shows that he is already outside the bounds of human nature and is likened in virtue to God Himself, so that, by doing that which is proper only to God, he himself evidently becomes a second god, for the remission of sins is a property that belongs exclusively to God."[75]

However, it is not difficult to notice that the predominance of ontological predicates in the concept of God exerts its influence also on the idea of the moral likening to God. Just as in the doctrine of God, the

70. Gregory of Nyssa, *Or. Dom*. 5, PG 44:1177.
71. Gregory of Nazianzus, *Or*. 17.9, PG 35:976.
72. Gregory of Nyssa, *De beatit*. 1, PG, 44:1200.
73. Gregory of Nyssa, *In Cant*. 1, PG 44:776.
74. Gregory of Nyssa, *De virg*. 1, PG 46:320.
75. Gregory of Nyssa, *Or. Dom*. 5, PG 44:1177.

moral traits of the Supreme Person are interpreted in a cosmic sense, so in the domain of ethics, moral perfection is considered from the point of view of likening to the metaphysical properties of God. Morality seeks its sanction not so much in the fact that "God is love" as in the fact that he is a monad. If we read attentively, we can already find this tendency in the works of Gregory of Nyssa.

"Blessed are the peacemakers": These are not only those in society who sow peace and do away with discord, but also those "who put a stop to internecine war in themselves," enabling the mind to gain dominance over the passions and establishing the harmony of the personality. "Divinity is simple, uncomplex, indescribable . . . Like God, human nature too, in this case, is made simple, indescribable, and as if one in the authentic sense, so that in it the visible is the same thing as the hidden and the hidden is the same thing as the visible."[76]

In the *Areopagitica*, in conformity with the insistence with which the idea of the monad is advanced in the doctrine of God, this feature is developed systematically and dominates the author's entire ethical terminology. He who has renounced evil "has become onelike and given his word to become wholly fused with the One."[77] Vicious people "aspire toward material and multifariously passionate changes."[78] He who repents is a person who "has not yet become fully onelike."[79] Christian ascetics are called monks "because of their indivisible and onelike life, which unites them in the pious rejection of those who are preoccupied with the cares and works of everyday life and raises them into divinelike unity."[80] This unity is expressed in the harmony of the person who has overcome his inner divisions and in the peace and concord of the Christian society from which have been expelled all egotistical tendencies and theoretical errors, always individual, in contrast to the universality of truth.[81] Therefore, "every sacrament conducts our divided lives into onelike deification and, in the divinelike convergence of different men, it gives to all of them communion and union with the

76. Gregory of Nyssa, *De beatit.* 7, PG 44:1289.
77. Dionysius the Areopagite, *EH* 2.3.5, PG 3:401.
78. Ibid., 3.3.7, PG 3:433.
79. Ibid., 3.3.7, PG 3:436.
80. Ibid., 4.1.3, PG 3:533.
81. Dionysius the Areopagite, *DN* 4.6, PG 3:701.

One."[82] Thus, the actualization of the ideal of gospel perfection imprints in the human being the fundamental and supreme property of Divinity: his unity and simplicity. The peace which has poured out of the Divine monad and been fragmented into the multiplicity of separate phenomena, ascends into the primordial unity in the freely established simplicity of the moral personality.

The idea of deification presupposes the physical communion of the human being with God. Nevertheless, when one first becomes acquainted with the group of concepts expounded here, it seems that they do not contain anything mystical, but rather represent nothing more than a kind of moral sermon. But, in fact, in this case, too, deification is understood in the sense of the real presence of God in the human being. However, if the realistic doctrine of deification is based on the Stoics' schema of mixing, here the fundamental schema is the Platonic idea of participation. To become convinced of this, we must keep in mind, first of all, the cosmological conception of the Neoplatonists, which the Christian thinkers adopted with substantial modifications (which are not important for us here); and secondly, the idea of the necessary inner relation between proto-image and image, an idea which is characteristic of the thought of antiquity.

Nature is divided into two elements. Its passive basis—matter without qualities—does not have anything divine. Although this basis comes from God, it is a negation of Divinity, the deprivation and deficiency of God, the limit beyond which positive being is transformed into its negation. In its active element, the world participates in God. God permeates the world with his powers, but he does this not as a Being who has nothing in common with the world. The first cause of all things lives and acts precisely in the qualitative determinacy of the world. The being of the world is the power of being that emanates from God. "Nothing can abide in being without abiding in that which exists," says Gregory of Nyssa, "and, properly speaking, that which exists primordially is God's essence, about which one must necessarily believe that, in all entities, It is their very abiding."[83] In the same way, the beauty of the world is a reflection of the divine beauty. Thus, nature is deified by the real pres-

82. Dionysius the Areopagite, *EH* 3.1, PG 3:421.

83. Gregory of Nyssa, *Or. Cat*. 32, PG 45:80.

ence of God in it.[84] But, of all the parts of the world, only the human being is free; only he, by the efforts of his will, can liken himself to God and in proportion to this likening receive into himself more and more divine powers. The presence of God in the freely established qualitative determinacy of moral character is the deification of the latter.

The scope and significance of this idea will become clearer if we turn our attention to the close convergence postulated in the patristic literature between the proto-image and the likeness. The works of the writers we are examining in this section do not contain much material on this subject, but we are justified in commenting on the tendencies of their doctrine on the basis of later developments, in which these tendencies achieved their full expression. If you're holding a fabric whose threads form a drawing so fine that your eye has difficulty discerning all its details, then look at it through a magnifying glass. Then you will easily be able to discern the fine drawing with the naked eye. It will be exactly the same way with the question that interests us. The idea of the necessary connection between proto-image and image, which the two Gregories and Pseudo-Dionysius had in mind when they spoke of deification through likening to God, attained its full development and was clarified in relation to all of its logical consequences when the intense need to polemicize against the iconoclasts sufficiently motivated the activity of thought in this direction. This idea was given a full and definitive expression in the works of Theodore the Studite in his defense of the veneration of icons. He who, gazing at the fragrant beauty of Divinity, says the Areopagate, images this beauty in himself and becomes like it, this person resembles an artist who attentively gazes upon a face that serves as the model for his portrait, and is not distracted by anything else that might be before his eyes but only tries to reproduce the original with all exactitude. Such an artist "will make, if one can use such an expression, a *double* of the one he is portraying, and he will represent reality *in the likeness, the proto-image in the image and the one in the other, except the distinction of essence*."[85] The underscored

84. Dionysius the Areopagite speaks of the de facto deification of nature in the measure accessible for it (*DN* 9.5, PG 3:912; 12.3, PG 3:972; 2.7, PG 3:645). Maximus the Confessor went further. He extended the ideal of the human deification to all of nature. Through Christ, first the human being is deified; then through the human being, all of nature will be deified.

85. Dionysius the Areopagite, *EH* 4.3.1, PG 3:473.

words of the Areopagite became the slogan of the defenders of icons. Every representation presupposes a proto-image and an image. The real body of Christ is the proto-image, His icon is the image. The two are intimately connected. In itself, Christ's body has a form, contours, an external appearance. And in virtue of likeness, this same form belongs to the icon. Therefore proto-image and image differ in material, nature, and essence, but with respect to likeness they are one and the same. "A representation of Christ is not something other in relation to Christ, except for distinction of essence."[86] The necessary real relation between proto-image and image is expressed, on the one hand, in the fact that to the image is communicated the power that belongs to the proto-image, and on the other hand, in the fact that all that is enacted over the image goes back to the proto-image.

The icon is full of divine powers. God is everywhere; however, he is everywhere not to an equal degree but in proportion to the capacity of a given being to perceive him. Christ's deified flesh is entirely permeated with Divinity. But flesh is characterized by form and contour, which in the person of Christ were bearers of divine power. An icon contains not the whole deified flesh but only its shadow, its external appearance, its contour, and therefore Divinity too is present in it to the extent this shadow can encompass it.[87]

Since the honor conferred upon the image goes back to the proto-image, both receive the same veneration. "When veneration is given to Christ, it is given also to His image as found in Christ; and when veneration is given to His image, it is given also to Christ, for it is precisely Christ who receives veneration in the image. And if Christ is undeniably venerated by all creatures in heaven, on earth, and in the nether regions, it is clear that all these creatures also undeniably venerate His image as found in Christ."[88] Both the veneration of icons and their desecration

86. Theodore the Studite, *Antirrhetica adversus iconomachos* 3.14, PG 99:425 (Russ trans. The SPbDA edition. St.-Pb., 1907–1908, Vol. 1, 184).

87. "Divinity is present and is to be worshipped in the icon to the extent that It is present in the icon as in the shadow of the flesh united with It . . . Divinity is also present in representations of the cross and in other divine objects, but it is present in them not according to unity of nature, since these objects are not deified flesh; rather, it is present in them according to their participation which is relative to It." Theodore the Studite, *Antirrhetica adversus iconomachos* 1.12, PG 99:344 (Russ. trans. Vol. 1, 128).

88. Theodore the Studite, *Antirrhetica adversus iconomachos* 2.18, PG 99:364 (Russ. trans. Vol. 1, 141). Cf. 3.7, PG 99:432 (Russ. trans. Vol. 1, 188).

have relation to Christ himself. As proof of this, Theodore the Studite refers to the legend of an icon of the Lord which had been desecrated and pierced with a lance, and it was said that blood and water flowed from this icon and healed the sick. Here Theodore adds: "All that refers to the likeness has such a communion with the proto-image that the sufferings of Christ's image are the suffering of Christ Himself."[89]

Such a close necessary relation between the icon and the proto-image is based on their likeness, or resemblance. Where there is no likeness between them, there is also no relation. The wood, gold, silver, in general the material out of which the icon is made, does not have any significance. The defenders of icons earnestly put forward the idea that it is not the material that is venerated,[90] since icons on which the image has been effaced are "burned like useless wood."[91] On the other hand, the orthodox polemicists agreed with the iconoclasts that there can be no icons of God the Father, since he is indescribable, does not have any form or features which could be reproduced on an icon. Finally, icons which are painted ineptly are venerated only in the measure they conform with the proto-image: "An icon is venerated not to the extent it diverges from resemblance to the proto-image but to the extent it represents a likeness to it, since in a certain respect (an ineptly painted icon too) represents an image identical to the proto-image."[92]

Thus, the cosmological conception and philosophical theory later advanced by the orthodox in defense of the veneration of icons show how close a connection was established by church thought between proto-image and image, and this in turn casts a bright light on the religious meaning of the doctrine of deification through likening to God. In the soul that has likened itself to God, he abides really. Thus, "the angels have imaged and imprinted the Good in themselves to such an extent that they have become second lights and, through the emanations and transmissions of the first Light, can illuminate others."[93] A human being who has imaged God in himself becomes, as it were, his

89. Ibid., 2.19, PG 99:365 (Russ. trans. Vol. 1, 142–43).

90. Ibid., 3.2, PG 99:421 (Russ. trans. Vol. 1, 180).

91. John of Damascus, *De sacris imaginibus* 3, PG 94:1368 (Russ. trans.: *Tri zashchititel'nye slova*, 124).

92. Theodore the Studite, *Antirrhetica adversus iconomachos* 3.5, PG 99:421 (Russ. trans. Vol. 1, 180–81).

93. Gregory of Nazianzus, *Or*. 28.31, PG 36:72.

living icon, a bearer of his Divine powers;[94] and about the saints John of Damascus says the same thing as about icons: "The honor bestowed upon our ardent co-servants demonstrates love for our common Lord, and *veneration of the image passes over to the Proto-image*."[95] Thus, the commonality of the fundamental idea linked two dogmas in the church consciousness: that of the veneration of saints and that of the veneration of icons.[96]

B.

A human being can also achieve a union with God this intimate through knowledge. But he encounters an obstacle to this in his nature, which he therefore must overcome and transcend.

In its usual state, human thought cannot fathom the mysteries of the Divine nature. It views everything through the colored glasses of its subjectivity. The forms of human thought are directly opposite to the properties of God as an object of knowledge. God is the unconditional monad, whereas the human mind lives in the sphere of multiplicity and knows truth only in its parts. God is immaterial, whereas the soul is joined to flesh and bears the chains of sensuousness. For the Eternal, all is given in one frozen instant, whereas our mind fragments the wholeness of this instant, and represents eternity in the form of the extension without beginning and without end of time. Scripture calls God spirit, fire, love, wisdom, but when we attempt to realize these images in our thought, we inevitably weigh them down with the stamp of corporeality and multiplicity. With the idea of spirit, we associate movement and propagation in space; fire we cannot imagine without its colors and fluctuating contours. When we speak of God's love and wisdom, we always have human love and wisdom in mind.[97] Thus, Gregory of Nyssa says that "whatever our mind might look at, it sees only itself, imagining that

94. John of Damascus, *De fide orthodoxa* 4.15, PG 94:1164–65 (Russ. trans.: *Tri zashchititel'nye slova*, 263–64).

95. John of Damascus, *De fide orthodoxa* 4.16, PG 94:1172 (Russ. trans., 268).

96. In defense of the veneration of icons many proofs of a purely ecclesial character were adduced: references to Holy Scripture and Tradition, arguments of a dogmatic character, utilitarian considerations, etc. What is important for us here is the philosophical side of these proofs.

97. Gregory of Nazianzus, *Or.* 28.13, PG 36:41. Cf. *Or.* 27.6, PG 36:17; 37.4, PG 36:285.

it sees something higher than itself."[98] "All our notions of God," he continues, "are nothing but idols forbidden by the Ten Commandments."[99] From this comes the rule: "If one who has seen God has understood what he has seen, this means that he has not seen God."[100] Or: "Words about God are the more perfect, the less comprehensible they are."[101]

In order to enter into intellectual contact with God, the human mind must gradually liberate itself from the tyranny of the forms of its thought—from sensuousness and multiplicity. To this height it is raised by revelation. The latter is adapted to the properties of human thought, and in its essence it is the transition of truth from the state of unity and spirituality to the state of multiplicity and materiality.[102] All the things that can serve as the point of departure in the mind's striving to know God (nature, Scripture, the historical person of Christ) are, taken together, not more than an extended allegory which must be deciphered. Whereas revelation proceeds from the one to the many, from the spiritual to the sensuous, human ascent into the divine domain must be accomplished in the reverse order. Clement of Alexandria already gave a general outline of the human path to God, and this doctrine was given a fully finished form in the *Areopagitica*. "Let us imagine," says Clement, "some material object, and abstract from it both its physical and its geometrical properties, i.e., the three spatial dimensions. The point that remains is a monad, but one that is situated in space. If we abstract from it the latter as well, we will obtain a monad in the unconditional sense. By thus having detached ourselves from the representation of all that is corporeal and of the so-called incorporeal, we will cast ourselves down before the grandeur of Christ, and from there, through holiness, we will reach the representation of the Infinite, having gained knowledge not of what He is but of what He is not."[103] In the process of the intellectual ascent to God, the Areopagite, relying on the more developed ideas of

98. Gregory of Nyssa, *In Eccl.* 7, PG 44:729.

99. Gregory of Nyssa, *Vit. Mos.*, PG 44:377 (Russ. trans. Moscow, 1861–1872, Part 1, 317).

100. Dionysius the Areopagite, *Ep.* 1, PG 3:1065; cf. Gregory of Nyssa, *Vit. Mos.*, PG 44:404.

101. Gregory of Nazianzus, *Or.* 28.21, PG 36:53.

102. Dionysius the Areopagite, *EH* 1.4.5, PG 3:376–77.

103. Clement of Alexandria, *Strom.* 5.2.6–15, PG 9:29.

his immediate literary precursors, especially Gregory of Nyssa, notes three stages.

The *First Stage*. Knowledge begins with the most concrete symbols of nature and Scripture. "Having received existence from true Beauty, nature in all its parts bears the reflection of this Beauty." Thus, the sun is a symbol of God, who creates all things and attracts all things to himself.[104] The flowers and the green of the fields are an image of the evanescence of human life and the transience of its happiness.[105] Grapes remind us of the One who called himself the Vine.[106] The immateriality of the soul is an image of the incorporeality of God, while the capacity of thought to transport itself over a thousand miles in a single instant, to extend into the past and into the future, is an image of God's eternity and nonextensionality.[107]

Holy Scripture, too, is full of symbols. "It expressed in riddles, images, allegories, and so-called dark speech high truths relating to contemplation and surpassing the understanding of ordinary men."[108] With this aim, "it clothes ineffable Good in fiery human garments; it speaks of His eyes, lips, hands; it surrounds Him with cups and goblets." These images should be understood in relation with the spirituality and grandeur of the Being to whom they refer.[109]

The *Second Stage*. This is the attempt to know God through abstract thought. The concepts at which a human being arrives when he generalizes the concrete data of sense perceptions more precisely represent God's nature. "By gaining knowledge of that which exists through inference from consequence to cause and thus reducing the multiplicity of that which exists to unity, human thought approaches a way to know the angels." In the *Areopagitica*, being, unity, equality, good are the spiritual and incorporeal names of God.[110]

This stage includes the spiritual knowledge of the Divine Logos in the historical phenomenon of Christ. In descending from heaven and

104. Dionysius the Areopagite, *CH* 4, PG 3:444; *Ep*. 9.2, PG 3:1108.
105. Basil of Caesarea, *Hex*. 5.2, PG 29:96.
106. Ibid., 5.6, PG 29:108.
107. Basil of Caesarea, *Hom. div*. 3, *In illud: "Attende tibi ipsi"* 7, PG 31:213, 216.
108. Origen, *C. Cel*. 7.10, PG 11:1433.
109. Dionysius the Aregopagite, *DN* 1.8, PG 3:597; 9.5, PG 3:928–29.
110. Ibid., 7.2, PG 3:868.

entering into the limits of human word and activity, the Son of God completely covered himself with flesh as with a veil.[111] For this reason, the revelation in Christ's humanity does not yet represent the final and definitive truth. According to Clement of Alexandria, only a simple believer (one who is a beginner and uneducated) can limit himself to knowledge of the bodily appearance of the Logos, extracting therefrom moral edification for himself. A perfect Christian, a gnostic, must, with his spiritual gaze, penetrate behind the veils of flesh and ascend to the contemplation of the Divine Word himself. Origen allowed that Christ's Body changed according to the degree of the spiritual development of those with whom he came into contact: for some this Body seemed to lack "fineness of appearance, beauty," while others saw it as beautiful and divine.[112] According to a tradition widespread in Alexandria, the saints in heaven will find inexpressible bliss in contemplating the immaterial Divinity, whereas the righteous who are not fully perfect will not go further than the contemplation of Christ's glorified humanity.[113] All this shows that eastern mysticism focused exclusively on the immaterial, and that totally alien to it was the experiencing of the circumstances of the Savior's earthly life, an experiencing that was so intense in the West that it sometimes reached the extreme of stigmata.

The *Third Stage*. In his knowledge, a human being can ascend not only above sense perception but also above reason, above discursive thought and its forms. By becoming higher than himself in this way, by transcending his own nature, he enters into direct union with God, as if becoming identical with the Unknowable One himself. This is the state of ecstasy. Psychologically, it is characterized, first of all, by the loss of consciousness, not only of sense perceptions, but also of abstract ideas. "Having left behind all that is visible—not only *that* which the senses perceive but also *that* which reason sees—the mind ceaselessly advances toward that which is more inner, to the point where, by its efforts, it can penetrate into the invisible and unknowable and there see God."[114]

According to the Areopagite, "in striving to attain contemplation it is necessary to leave behind the senses and the activity of the mind,

111. Gregory of Nazianzus, *Or*. 39.13, PG 36, 349; *Poemata dogmatica*, 9.54, PG 37:460.

112. Origen, *C. Cel*. 2.64; 6.75–77, PG 11:896, 1409–14.

113. Cyril of Alexandria, *Glaphyrorum in Exodum* 2.2, PG 69:428–29.

114. Gregory of Nyssa, *Vit. Mos*., PG 44:376–77.

all that is sensuous and intelligible, all that is and all that is not."[115] The disappearance of the consciousness of the object of thought necessarily entails, in the capacity of the second feature of ecstasy, the weakening of the self-consciousness. In this state, according to the same author, "the mind exists neither for itself nor for others, but solely for the One Who is higher than all."[116] Together with the loss of consciousness of the subject and of the object, the whole mechanism of ordinary psychical activity appears to stop. The succession of feelings and thoughts that conditions the perception of time stops for an instant, and the soul comes into contact with unmoving eternity. "Having placed itself in its thought far from all that is changeable and unstable, the soul is in an unchanging and unalterable state and finds itself kindred to the Unalterable and Unchanging."[117] Finally, the state of ecstasy is connected with the feeling of the closeness of Divinity, of direct union with him, of identification. "The mind, going out of itself, becomes God's."[118]

Such contact with God is the deification of the soul, as if the soul's reception of God into itself. Ancient philosophy did not understand the creative character of human knowledge. This philosophy always viewed the mind's cognitive activity as the latter's apprehension of the object of knowledge. According to Augustine's gnoseology, ideas, i.e., the laws of logic and mathematics, the norms of esthetic and moral judgments, are not mere means of the activity of thought but, existing outside of and independently of the consciousness, are apprehended by the intellect as light is perceived by the eye.[119] Therefore, in the patristic literature, knowledge is always compared with the nourishing of the soul. About the knowledge of God, Augustine says: "It appeared to me that I heard Your voice proclaiming to me from the heights: 'I am bread for those who are ripe in years; grow and partake of me; but it is not the case that you will turn Me into yourself, like food into your flesh; rather, you will turn into Me."[120]

115. Dionysius the Areopagite, *MT* 1.1, PG 3:997.
116. Ibid., 1.3, PG 3:1001.
117. Gregory of Nyssa, *Or. Dom*. 2, PG 44:1140.
118. Dionysius the Aregopagite, *DN* 7.1, PG 3:868; 4.11, PG 3:708–9.
119. Storz, *Philosophie des hl. Augustinus*, 46–85.
120. Augustine, *Conf*. 7.10, PL 32:742 (Russ. trans. Vol. 1, 177).

In conformity with this general view, Gregory of Nyssa writes: "He who has gained knowledge of the permanent nature has seen the truly existent good, and he has possessed that which he has seen, because to contemplate this good is to possess It."[121] In Scripture we find a symbolic description of the deification of the soul through contemplation: "Moses in the course of forty days under the veil of darkness (in the period of the Sinai lawgiving) partook of everlasting life and was outside of nature, because at that time he did not have need of food for his body."[122]

That is the path of the intellectual ascent to God. Revelation is like a magnificent temple: one first passes through porticos, galleries, numerous corridors and passages. The walls are decorated by mosaics and pictures. They shine with the brightness of colors, with the diversity and plasticity of artistic images. Then there's a series of empty, geometrically regular halls with simple symbolic images on the walls. Finally, one reaches the holy sanctuary, mysteriously hidden by heavy curtains, behind which one is surrounded by profound darkness and silence, but through this darkness and quietude is diffused the spirit of the Ineffable.

C.

According to the opinion and personal religious experience of mystics of the church, the process of the soul's intellectual ascent to God is connected with the development of very intense feeling. These mystics speak a great deal about the love of the believer's soul for God, even about eros. The works of both Gregories are full of profound lyricism. The elegies of Gregory the Theologian reproduce with astonishing power the fundamental tone in the mood of his epoch. Gregory of Nyssa's commentary on the Song of Songs, if this work is viewed as the confession of a soul seeking God, must be considered one of the most remarkable works in the patristic literature. Let us now attempt to clarify the character and source of this life of feeling.

We must first ask how a concept of God composed of dry logical abstractions could have excited such enthusiasm. Of course, the ideas of monad, being, and equality, could not, in and of themselves, have stirred

121. Gregory of Nyssa, *In Eccl.* 1, PG 44:624.

122. Gregory of Nyssa, *Vit. Mos.*, PG 44:321.

human feelings, but they resemble a concave mirror. If thermal rays are incident on the cold surface of such a mirror, then, collected in its focus, they can ignite combustible materials. In the same way, the abstract concept of God can warm human hearts only by the heat of reflected feelings. The religious mood of the Christian idealists was nourished from two sources: (1) by the great enjoyment associated with independent spiritual activity and (2) by the living sense of nature. The first item is indicated by their theory of knowledge, the second by their concept of God, in which the ontological predicates of Divinity are delineated with such emphasis.

The joy of independent spiritual activity is excited in us by things that are incompletely expressed. We are most strongly stirred by artistic images which, while exciting our thought and imagination, leave sufficient room for the independent inner activity of this thought and imagination. This rule is fully satisfied by the famous Laocoon Group. Two enormous snakes have fallen upon the priest Laocoon and his young sons. The struggle has just begun; no one has yet been crushed in the terrible embrace; no one has fallen. The most intense drama still lies ahead. The artist has given a powerful stimulus to our imagination and left it on the crossroads between the hope that the victims will be spared and the overwhelming fear that the most repulsive of beasts will triumph over the most sublime and beautiful work of nature. A different impression is produced by a painting of Repin at the Moscow Tretyakov Gallery: Ivan the Terrible has killed his son. The highest note is taken; everything is expressed completely. The murderer has leaped up, overturned the throne, and is pressing to his breast his son's drooping head with the pierced temple, and dark, thick blood is flowing between his fingers. Imagination cannot go anywhere further, and the painting's effect is an exclusively physiological one: the blood and Ivan the Terrible's insane eyes . . .

The character of the Cappadocians' religious mood very clearly indicates the psychological source we have just been speaking of. The life of their heart is primarily characterized by agitation of the soul, the eternal search for one boundless all-satisfying good, constant ebb and flow, confused longings, first elevating one and then casting one to the ground, calling one like the shadows of a springtime dawn, and hopeless like November dusks, the bright lightnings of nearly deciphered mysteries and the bitter sense of the impotence of all exertions. "The

beloved," says Gregory the Theologian, "penetrates the mind with a ray of his light and at once flees the rapidly moving mind. The more he is known, the farther he moves away, as if escaping out of our embrace, and summoning our soul and drawing it after him . . ." "Like an indefinable and infinite sea of essence . . . in indistinct reflections and barely perceptible features He is shaded into some appearance of reality. He flees before thought can represent Him, and slips away from it just as, it seems, it is beginning to know Him. This is lightning. It suddenly illuminates our spiritual gaze and immediately disappears, leaving behind it an even more profound darkness. By that which is knowable in Him He draws us to Himself, whereas by that which is unknowable He excites in us even more desire and thirst."[123]

To this sense of seeking corresponds the canvas which was most often used by the church writers to express their mood. This canvas was the Song of Songs, and the commentaries on it constituted the fullest expression of this mysticism of seeking. In order to become convinced of the correspondence between this canvas and the picture drawn on it, let us compare the fundamental tone of the above extract from the works of Gregory the Theologian with the following picture from chapter five of the Song of Songs: The Shulamite is in Solomon's palace, torn away from the fragrant gardens of the Galilee, where in the spring the lilies are so beautiful and the turtle-doves coo so sweetly. She is asleep, but even in sleep her heart cannot find repose: she is yearning to see the shepherd of Sharon under the shade of the apple trees. And here in her sleep she hears: her beloved is coming, and fragrant dew is on his curls. He has come, he knocks, he calls her. She should rise, run, open the door to him, but her tunic has fallen off, and her feet are washed. Finally, she leaps up, runs to the door, opens it wide, but her beloved has turned away with an indifferent air and departed.

In the two cases we find the same seekings, the same impulses, the same thirst, excited by obstacles. That is why the dreams and sighs of a girl in love became a symbol of the soul that is bored in this luxurious world and that in unrestrained yearning seeks the source of true life and renewal beyond this world.

123. Gregory of Nazianzus, *Or*. 38.7, PG 36:317. Cf. *Or*. 45.3, PG 36:625, 628; *Poemata Dogmatica* 7.1–12, PG 37:438–39. Gregory of Nyssa, *Vit. Mos*., PG 44:401. Cf. *In Cant*. 2, PG 44:777; 4, PG 44:845; 5, PG 44:860; 6, PG 44:892–93; 8, PG 44:940–41.

It is not difficult to explain psychologically the origin of this mysticism of seeking. Rooted deep in the indestructible ideal impulses of human nature, this mysticism was nourished by a symbolic view of nature, Scripture, and the historical person of Christ. Nature and Scripture, like an unfinished picture, offered an abundance of concrete impressions, vivid and enthralling, but dogmatics prohibited one from surrendering totally to these impressions and, beyond them, revealed an unbounded horizon for the development of religious thought and pious contemplations. What a boundless horizon of the untried and unfelt was revealed already to Clement and Origen! Armed with the allegorical method of interpretation and weighing every symbol of Scripture, they created Christian philosophy and prepared the way for mysticism. Starting with the fourth-century, creative freedom in the domain of the speculative elucidation of Christianity became limited. Not only dogma but gradually even the interpretation of Holy Scripture, becoming traditional, acquired an obligatory character. At that point, personal piety made for itself a new channel in which it could move freely, and it created the so-called mystagogy. If everything is a symbol, then cult too is a symbol. Censing, the singing of hymns, liturgical reading, the entries and exits of the bishop—all these things are symbols full of profound meaning, and at the same time there is nothing established, traditional, obligatory here. Filling the rituals with new meaning depending on the mood of the faithful, religious thought and imagination, in this freedom of pious creativity, experienced the history of salvation with profound excitement. The subtle enjoyment of independent spiritual activity thus serves as the first component of the mood which originates in the works of Clement and Origen and acquires a finished form in the works of the Cappadocians and Dionysius the Areopagite.

The second component is the sense of nature. The abstract concept of God, as I have said, can warm the heart only with the heat of reflected feeling. This idea needs to be clarified using the psychology of religious symbolism. For us, Christians, the cross is a holy symbol that has many meanings; it is the bearer of our feelings of piety and gratitude toward Christ. But, in itself, independently of the associations connected with it, it represents two intersecting beams of wood, and in someone who has heard nothing of Christ, it cannot excite any feelings. For the ancient pagan it was even an object of horror and repulsion, as an instrument of shameful and agonizing execution. But the Christian associates with it

feelings which he takes from the Gospel narratives of the sufferings of Christ, from inner experiences of the idea of redemption, and from the history of the cross in the life of the church, as an aid to Christians in all calamities and dangers. All these complex groups of ideas and feelings have been associated with the sign of the cross, and they come to life of themselves in the soul when the Christian gazes at it. We have the cross; the religiosity of the ancient Christian thinkers had the abstract concept of the Divine monad. We have the notion of redemptive suffering; the ancient religiosity had living impressions of being, of its beauties and physical perfections, as reflections of Divinity in the world.

This source of the religious enthusiasm of the Origenists is indicated, first of all, by the aforementioned cosmic character of their concept of God. The ontological categories of being, unity, and equality are crystalline deposits of concrete thoughts and feelings, and from crystals it is not difficult to judge about the composition of the solution. The preponderance of ontological categories in the concept of God corresponds to that profound, vital, and even romantic sense of nature which makes the *Hexameron* of Basil the Great and certain orations and poems of Gregory the Theologian so close to our contemporary mood.[124]

The doctrine of the "gathering of feeling" represents for us a clearer and more direct indication of the same source of the religious mood of the writers of the idealistic group. The heart should not be permitted, they say, "to disperse itself over many things" and to concentrate itself on the visible. When individual phenomena of beauty, shining out everywhere in nature, attract feeling to themselves, and the heart gazes at them with astonishment, it is then that people deify these phenomena.[125] That is how the cult of the sun and the stars came into being. In this case feeling is likened to a river that is used for irrigation: the river is directed over a system of channels, pipes, and gutters until it totally disappears in the sands. On the contrary, it is necessary to gather one's feeling and to concentrate it on the idea of immaterial, perfect beauty reflected in nature. Then feeling, like flowing water which encounters a dam, begins to rise and to concentrate on God.[126]

124. For example, Gregory of Nazianzus, *Or.* 6, PG 35:722; *Or.* 44, PG 36:608; *Or.* 3, PG 35:517.

125. Gregory of Nazianzus, *Or.* 28.13–14, PG 36:44.

126. Gregory of Nyssa, *De virg.* 7, PG 46:353.

These general propositions presuppose the following psychological process.[127] Feeling apprehends only individual phenomena of beauty in nature, but thought completes them and by firm association connects them with the abstract concept of beauty. Take this youth, for example; today he is beautiful like the evening star, but tomorrow his face will be covered with wrinkles and he will be bent over. Visible beauty is fleeting, but imagination, completing the individual impression with respect to its duration, conceives beauty as permanent in the idea of beauty. This man has brilliant talents, but he is low morally. Visible beauty is partial, but the imagination, completing it with respect to what it lacks, conceives it as whole and perfect in the idea of beauty. What can be more beautiful than the Alps? This is a frozen protest of nature, which has cast off fetters that had not yet had a chance to harden around it. But Caesar, while crossing them, was writing his Latin grammar and complaining about the *taedium Alpium*.[128] Visible beauty is relative: some like it, some don't. But, here too, imagination, making its contribution, aspires toward unconditional beauty, as it is given in the idea of beauty.

Thus, individual esthetic stirrings, arising under the influence of nature, are associated with the concept of beauty in itself and fill us with a sense of the latter. Through a similar psychological process, the concepts of being, good, life, and mind are linked with living emotions, and then all of them, together with the feelings that fill them, are fused

127. This passage serves as a commentary to the following words of Gregory of Nyssa: "This, then, is the path to lead us to the discovery of the Beautiful. All other objects that attract men's love, be they never so fashionable, be they prized never so much and embraced never so eagerly, must be left below us, as too low, too fleeting, to employ the powers of loving which we possess; not indeed that those powers are to be locked up within us unused and motionless; but only that they must first be cleansed from all lower longings; then we must lift them to that height to which sense can never reach. Admiration even of the beauty of the heavens, and of the dazzling sunbeams, and, indeed, of any fair phenomenon, will then cease. The beauty noticed there will be but as the hand to lead us to the love of the supernal Beauty whose glory the heavens and the firmament declare, and whose secret the whole creation sings. One who has attained the state where he is capable of leaving behind all that is human will with prayer and desire aspire toward the sole thing that does not take its beauty from outside, that is not temporary and relative, but is beautiful out of itself and through itself and has beauty in itself, not such a beauty that at some time was not beauty or will not be it, but a beauty that is always equal to itself, a beauty beyond addition and multiplication and not subject to any change or alteration." Gregory of Nyssa, *De virg.* 9, PG 46:357. [Partly taken from NPNF 2 5:355–56.—Trans.]

128. The repugnant Alps (Lat.).—Ed.

in the idea of the Divine monad. In this way, the entire abundance of the life of the heart, nourished by the contemplation of the physical perfections of nature, was concentrated on the idea of the one Divinity without qualities, in the same way that rays of the entire spectrum of colors, having passed through a convex glass, are united in a single bright and brilliant point. The concentration of feelings on the idea of God, constituting a process that is completely parallel to the cognitive one, is a necessary condition of the union with God and deification. Love, writes the Areopagite, is distinguished by an ecstatic character. Love cannot bear it when the loved one locks himself up in himself; it prompts him to leave his self-confinement and surrender to the object of love, "so that in him lives and acts no longer himself, but the one he loves," adds the Areopagite's paraphrast, Pachimer.[129]

Summing up all that has been said about the idealistic form of the idea of deification, we can express its essence in a few words. The common goal of the Christian writers of the idealistic orientation was to ascend above the limits of human nature, to become gods through a most intimate union with God. The path they took was the concentration of all inner life (will, thought, and feeling) on the one, all-embracing idea of Divinity, the simplification of one's personality in all these respects.

The idea of deification, so alien to banal eudemonism, was the central point of the religious life of the Christian East, the point around which revolved all the questions of dogmatics, ethics, and mysticism. This idea was clothed in forms of ancient philosophy which perhaps are inaccessible to our direct understanding, without commentaries. But the kernel of this idea—the thirst for physical renewal—constitutes the essential and necessary part of every religion. The vanity of all our efforts and the cold of the yawning grave poison all our joys. And this must be said not only in relation to the individual. Let humankind live for another ten thousand years; let it conquer nature and learn its mysteries. Humankind's libraries will then contain so many facts and ideas that if any single human consciousness could assimilate all of them, it would truly become divine. Numberless paintings, musical works, works of poetry, sculpture, and architecture would then be in humankind's possession, and if it were possible to gather into a single point the entire creative enthusiasm and ardor of feeling that went into producing

129. Dionysius the Aregopagite, *DN* 4.13; PG 3:712; cf. 776.

them, it seems one would have a hearth that would be capable of setting the whole world afire. But they say that our sun is gradually cooling and that after a certain period of time it will be totally extinguished.

> An ice-covered star
> Or extinct volcano,
> Our earth, like an empty ship,
> Will speed through the celestial ocean.
> And wandering between worlds,
> A spirit flying past will descend
> On the skeleton of our cities,
> As on mute granite . . .

And in the face of such a future, in one form or another, openly or secretly, with hope or with the sorrow of despair, the human being will not stop striving to become a god.

3

Clement of Alexandria on Trinitarian and Metaphysical Relationality in the Context of Deification

Vladimir Kharlamov

In contrast to distrust of Hellenistic learning and philosophy expressed by some early Christian authors,[1] Clement of Alexandria is not only fully aware, but also very consciously appropriates, the multidimensional and eclectic consortium of the rich Alexandrian intellectual milieu. Clement's discourse incorporates an intricate synthesis of concepts and language from Hellenistic Judaism, Stoicism, Middle Platonism, and Christian communities of different persuasions.

It is not surprising, however, that Hellenistic philosophy, in particular, would have a tremendous appeal to such Christian intellectuals as Clement without alarming their Christian senses. The understanding of philosophy in Late Antiquity as the search for wisdom and the true knowledge of things eternal and divine would lead to a view that the proper conduct in life should be described in philosophic terms. Therefore, the content of basic human knowledge and the underlying principles of the meaning of their culture were essentially expressed in those terms as well. Thus, in both the Christian and non-Christian perspectives, the approach to philosophy does not greatly differ from what could be understood as the quest for perfection, virtue, self-control, happiness, and knowledge of God. The true philosophy for Clement of Alexandria and many other early Christian and non-Christian writers is the ideal of the intellectual and moral life, that combines aspects of

1. See for example Irenaeus, *Haer*. 2.26.1.

contemplation and virtue or *theoria* and *praxis*. In Clement, close cooperation of *theoria* and *praxis* also has deificational significance, as he writes, "Knowledge is then followed by practical wisdom, and practical wisdom by self-control: for it may be said that practical wisdom is divine knowledge, and exists in those who are deified."[2] In addition to that, in early patristic defence of Christianity against accusations of lack of education, barbaric mannerism, and irrationality, there would necessarily arise an even closer connection between emerging Christian identity and Hellenistic learning.

As a result, the influence of Platonic metaphysics on Christian theology shows itself in the Christian understanding of the unchangeability and transcendence of God. Like Platonism, Christian theology viewed visible things as only distant and imperfect representations of the ultimately invisible reality of the spiritual realm, and these representations were granted a primary significance in the interpretation of ontological causality, which had considerable influence on Christian piety.[3] Such features of Christian theology were not a result of simple borrowing from Platonism. It is rather a natural process when a person utilizes the philosophical patterns of thinking that dominate their cultural surroundings, to the degree that those patterns do not introduce a conflict with their belief system. In this instance, Cornelia de Vogel notes, "Platonic philosophy gave to these facts a rational form of expression, by which Christians could be recognized as being in accordance with what they had learned from Scripture, but at the same time as deepening and confirming their Christian belief."[4] Clement utilized what he considered to be the best of his intellectual environment and profound personal learning to express a decidedly, at least to his own mind, Christian worldview that does not contradict Christian revelation. Also, in Clement, the learned orientation in his writings indicates not so much a wide-open reception of pagan philosophy into Christian discourse as a broad use of literary, conceptual, and thematic elements of philosophy for his own purpose. Emerging Christianity in Alexandria is significantly affected by the overarching Hellenistic culture; however, agendas and starting premises for Christian discourse in Alexandria

2. *Strom*. 6.15.125.4, GCS 52 [15]: Clemens 2:495; ANF 2:509. Cf. *Strom*. 7.1.3.6; esp. *Paed*. 1.5.21.2.

3. de Vogel, "Platonism and Christianity," 27–28, 47.

4. Ibid., 55.

and the development of Hellenistic philosophy are not always identical. The trinitarian aspect of Clement's theology is a good example of an explicitly Christian agenda. Even though the metaphysical aspect of the trinitarian interrelation might point to some developments in later Middle Platonism, the language and orientation of this discourse is Christian.

The complexity of the relationship of emerging Christianity in Alexandria with high Hellenistic culture is not the only complexity that is reflected in the theology of Clement. The character of early Alexandrian Christianity itself is not less complicated. Naturally, the city's strategic location and the presence of an extensive Jewish community would make Alexandria very attractive for Christian missionary activities. However, not much is known about Christian origins in Alexandria. It is not only obscure when Christianity was introduced into Egypt, we also do not know what type of Christianity arrived there first.

The Evangelist Mark is considered to be a founder of the Christian community in Alexandria.[5] Even though Eusebius does not indicate his sources, and neither Clement nor Origen mentioned Mark as the founder of Christianity in Egypt or Alexandria, this tradition seems to have been universally accepted during the Patristic period.[6] Recent extensive findings of biblical and apocryphal literature (both Jewish and Christian) in Egypt, with some of the preserved fragments dated as early as the second century, indicate a well-established—although we don't know how populous—Christian presence in that region. The eclectically intellectual, social, and cultural environment of Alexandria certainly could have had its impact on early Christianity there. It is plausible that at its initial stage, Christianity was represented by similarly diversified Christian groups that at the beginning were coexisting with each other with lesser altercation than in other places. For instance, Henry Chadwick notes, "With the teaching of Basilides and more especially of Valentine, Clement found himself in a fair degree of sympathy. Both are men of eminence whom he always regards with respect, even though he is aware of important differences."[7] This, among other reasons, can ex-

5. Eusebius, *EH* 2.16.1.

6. Gregory of Nazianzus, *Or*. 21.8; Jerome, *De Vir. Illustr*. 8.3; John Cassian, *Inst*. 11.5.

7. LCC 2:31.

plain the unreserved use of the "gnostic" vocabulary by Clement. What we would call the Gnostics, Clement would know as the Valentinians, the Carpocratians, and so forth.[8] The cosmopolitan and intellectual environment in Alexandria allowed smoother social integration of early Christian communities into the regular life of the city, as well as provided a fruitful soil for mutual exchange of ideas.[9] Presence of this syncretistic environment might explain the unprecedented intellectual freedom and idiosyncrasy that Clement exhibits in his writings.

The peculiarity of Clement's theological endeavour has tremendous cultural rooting, and is both descriptive of the Hellenism of that period, and is an implication of the emerging Christian worldview. Being a man of his time, with clear ties to the upper class of Alexandrian society, Clement is important for understanding the developing process by which vital aspects of Hellenistic culture experience significant transition and modification as they become integrated into Christianity. Clement is one of a few really independent theologians in the Patristic period who predominantly stand on the ground of their own personal spiritual journey as the basic guiding principle for theological interpretation and appropriation of what they understood as the true Christianity.[10] Nevertheless, Clement would never think of himself as one who attempted to be in opposition to mainstream Christianity.

When it comes to the Trinity, Clement is not a stranger to this tenet of Christian theology. He goes so far as to see the evidence for the Trinity even in Plato. After listing some of his findings in Plato, Clement concludes, "I understand nothing else than the Holy Trinity to be meant; for the third is the Holy Spirit, and the Son is the second, by whom all

8. What now is termed as Christian Gnosticism to contemporaries in the second century was most likely known as different congregations of Christian orientation usually identified by the name of their founder, where the boundaries among them at that time were less evident or articulated.

9. Eusebius proudly reports that one Alexandrian, Anatolius, who later became the bishop of Laodicea, was so well versed in arithmetic, geometry, astronomy, and philosophy that he was elected to be the head and the founder of the Aristotelian School in Alexandria, not to mention his successful political career as the senator of that city (*EH* 7.32.6–12).

10. Thus his theological standing to some degree predetermined his treatment in the further Christian tradition, as being considered a saint at first, slowly dropping from ecclesiastical records after the ninth century to the point of being considered heretical by Photius and as virtually non-existent for Medieval theologians.

things were made according to the will of the Father."[11] The listing of the first as the Father, the second as the Son, and the third as the Holy Spirit is both the acknowledgement of three persons and indication of the trinitarian order. At least in one instance, Clement explicitly highlights the individual uniqueness and distinction, as well as essential oneness among all three members of the Trinity, "O mystic wonder! The Father of all is one, the Word who belongs to all is one, the Holy Spirit is one and the same for all."[12] However, Clement's trinitarian affirmation is far from being fully developed. Overall, his trinitarian understanding is contextualized rather than stated explicitly. The general outlook of his trinitarian perspective leads to the suggestion that, being far from coherent, this perspective reflects a more reciprocally relational and economical approach, which at this stage of the development of Christian theology is not surprising to see in Clement.

If trinitarian language reflects a somewhat traditional expression of Christian theology even in its early manifestations, the deification theme is not that common in the first two centuries. Prior to Clement, this theme manifests itself in Christian theology on a very modest scale, especially in regard to direct deification vocabulary.[13] Therefore, when we enter the world of Clement, one thing that strikes us is his unreserved use of deification terminology. He basically employs the entire family of the technical language of deification, and in addition to that, quite frequently, simply calls the Gnostic-Christian θεός (god).[14]

Not all instances of deification language, however, are used in a Christian context. In Clement, we continue to see application of the same deification vocabulary almost without distinction, both to criticize

11. *Strom.* 5.14.103.1; GCS 52 [15]: Clemens 2:395; ANF 2:468.

12. *Paed*. 1.6.42.1; SVC 61:27; FC 23:40.

13. There are only a few such instances. Justin in *Dial.* 124.4, in the context of his interpretation of Ps 82:6 (81:6 LXX), for the first time in Christian tradition made an explicit deificational statement, using θεὸς γίγνομαι. Two more direct references to deification can be found in Theophilus of Antioch (*Ad Autol*. 2.24 and 27). There are a number of explicit deification references in Irenaeus, mostly preserved in Latin, see for example *Haer*. 3.17.1, 3.19.1, 4.20.6, 4.33.4; *Dem*. 11.

14. For the analysis of Clement's deification vocabulary see Russell, *Doctrine of Deification*, 122–23. Cf. Schurr, "On Logic of Ante-Nicene Affirmation," 98–99. It should be noted that Clement applies the term "god" not only to human beings, but also to angels and celestial/divine beings, see Butterworth, "Deification of Man," 160–61.

non-Christian practices of divinization and worship[15] and to promote the Christian understanding of deification. This indiscriminate use of deification vocabulary is an additional contribution from his intellectual milieu. Even though he introduced this language into Christian discourse, it was not necessarily a deliberate and fully preconceived effort on Clement's part, but rather a reflection of common vocabulary circulating in his intellectual environment that he found useful. It is why his vocabulary of deification is so diversified and undifferentiated between a Christian—positive application, and a critical of paganism—negative application. In a way, his use of one deification term over another is almost accidental. It is also why some Greek deification vocabulary we find in Clement is virtually absent from subsequent Christian writers. Clement of Alexandria is a man of great learning and great vocabulary, with which often we also find great obscurity. The deification theme is a good example.

The construction of a fully coherent view of deification in Clement is a rather challenging enterprise;[16] however, the main aspects of how he approaches this topic are significant and can be discerned. Clement develops the theme of deification on christological, anthropological, epistemological/gnosiological, and metaphysical levels. He does so both as a complex soteriology and as a unifying principle of the whole divine *oikonomia* for humanity, from its origin to the transforming process into the likeness of God. The likeness of a human being to God in Clement presents a complex synthesis of biblical and philosophical principles. It is paralleled and identified with, but not limited to, these: righteousness,[17] divine filiation,[18] beautification,[19] gnosis,[20] passionless-

15. See for example *Prot*. 2.26.1–6, 2.27.4–41.4, 2.37.4, 2.38.1, 3.44.2; *Strom*. 1.15.71.6, 4.12.85.1, 6.6.31.2. Cf. *Diogn*. 10.6; Tatian, *Orat*. 18.2; Athenagoras, *Leg*. 20.1; 22.9, 10, 12.

16. For surveys of Clement's view on deification see Butterworth, "Deification of Man," 157–69; Cullen, "Patristic Concept of Deification," 65–73; Gross, *Divinization*, 131–41; Lattey, "Deification of Man," 257–62; Russell, *Doctrine of Deification*, 121–40.

17. *Prot*. 12.122.4—123.1.

18. *Paed*. 1.6.26.1.

19. Ibid., 3.1.1.5.

20. *Strom*. 7.10.56.6–7.

ness or impassibility (ἀπάθεια),[21] and *monad*ification.[22] Cumulatively, these aspects of divine likeness contextualize the never-ending intellectual, moral, and cosmic approximation of a human being toward God, as a deifying progression.

From the beginning, a human being is created for immortality in the image and likeness of God's nature.[23] The presence of the mind in human nature brings an essential connection, and a mutual similarity, between God and a human being, "the image of mind is seen in man alone; so that the good man is, so far as his soul goes, in the form and likeness of God, while God in his turn is in the form of man: the form of each is mind."[24] This link between God and the human mind constitutes a natural ground for deification. However, more precisely, it is only the Logos who was in the image and likeness of God; human beings are only in the image,[25] or more accurately, in the image of the Image. The Logos is the image of God, while the human mind is the image of the Logos.[26] Human beings are the "third divine image, made as far as possible like the Second Cause."[27] In this instance, Clement points both to affinity of the human soul and mind to God, and an unbridgeable distinction between God and human beings.

Clement clearly affirms an ontological distinction between God and a human being, and also the transcendent mystery of divine nature. For one thing, "It is not possible to speak of the divine in its actual nature,"[28] for another, "God does not have a natural attitude towards us" and it is "the impertinence to say that we are a part of him and of the same substance as God."[29] Not only ontologically, but even virtuous

21. Ibid., 7.3.13.3. In the context of patristic theology, passionlessness should not be understood as apathy or indifference. It is the highest degree of spiritual freedom, when human beings are liberated from any external or internal factors (passions) that act upon them.

22. Ibid., 4.23.152.1.

23. Ibid., 5.14.94.5; 6.12.97.1.

24. Ibid., 6.9.72.2; GCS 52 [15]: Clemens 2:468; English translation in Butterworth, "Deification of Man," 157.

25. *Paed*. 1.12.98.3.

26. *Prot*. 10.98.4; *Strom*. 5.14.94.5.

27. *Strom*. 7.3.16.6—17.2; GCS 17: Clemens 3:12; ANF 2:527.

28. Ibid., 2.16.72.4; GCS 52 [15]: Clemens 2:151; FC 85:206.

29. Ibid., 2.16.74.1; GCS 52 [15]: Clemens 2:152; FC 85:207.

human qualities could not be identified with God, "For we do not say, as the Stoics do most impiously, that virtue in man and God is the same."[30] The same is true about human perfection and likeness to God; it does not imply the sense of identification.[31] Only through the mediation of the Logos and his incarnation do human beings receive the knowledge of divine essence.[32] It is the gift of God, through the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, but "the Spirit that is in us is not as a portion of God."[33] In this instance the Holy Spirit is understood as the source of divine inspiration dwelling in a human being, who is closely and intimately connected with the human soul and at the same time independent from the human soul as an individual entity, a person of the Trinity.[34]

God is present in human nature only noetically.[35] Clement follows Plato, whom he cites with approval, "Rightly, then, Plato says, 'that the man who devotes himself to the contemplation of ideas will live as a god among men; now the mind is the place of ideas, and God is mind.'"[36] The development of Middle Platonism in the time of Clement already manifested a shift toward Plato's theological formula from *Theaetetus* "becoming like unto God."[37] By practicing characteristics of the divine, such as passionlessness, a human being can advance in godlike perfection.[38] Clement's Middle Platonic view of assimilation to God here is combined with the Stoic notion of impassibility. Being like God and being impassible are essentially connected for Clement.[39] Impassibility introduces to the individual freedom from any desire that can affect and control human action, and at the same time inner unity makes this person holistically one. Human freedom from passions and spiritual integrity resemble the unity and autonomy of God. Through gnosis and suppression of passions, human beings "will be called gods and en-

30. Ibid., 7.14.88.5; GCS 17: Clemens 3:63; ANF 2:549. Cf. *Strom*. 6.14.114.4.

31. Ibid., 6.14.114.3–6.

32. Ibid., 5.10.66.3.

33. Ibid., 5.13.88.3; GCS 52 [15]: Clemens 2:384; ANF 2:465 (modified).

34. That the Holy Spirit is not a portion of God in human beings probably is aimed against Valentinian community.

35. *Paed*. 3.1.1.1.

36. *Strom*. 4.25.155.2; GCS 52 [15]: Clemens 2:317; ANF 2:438.

37. *Theaet*. 176b; Dillon, *Middle Platonists*, 9, 44, 114.

38. *Strom*. 7.3.13.3.

39. Lilla, *Clement of Alexandria*, 109–12.

throned in the company of the other gods who were put in their places by the Savior before them."[40]

An important departure from Platonism that Clement introduces here, in Choufrine's assessment, is "that in Platonism prior to Clement, 'assimilation' does not make one *closer* to God in any sense. God is there not as an end to pursue but rather a pattern (τὸ παράδειγμα) to imitate (to follow, ἕπεσθαι)."[41] Therefore, as Choufrine continues, "for [Clement] 'assimilation to God' [is] in a sense of participation in God himself, not in the sense of mere imitation (that is to say, *God Himself* is for him the end). 'Assimilation' thus means deification."[42] For Clement, assimilation to God is life in "the abodes of gods," an eternal feast of immortality, "the transcendentally clear and absolutely pure insatiable vision" of God, "being made like the Lord, up to the measure of his [human] capacity," close, uninterrupted and unmediated union with God.[43]

The assimilation to God in Clement not only goes further, beyond simple imitation of abstract principles of Platonic divine Forms and Ideas, but is also christologically grounded. It is assimilation to God the Father through the Son.[44] The Logos, who is with God as the Son, is with humanity as the Mediator and the Savior.[45] The pivotal moment in human deification for Clement is the incarnation of the Logos, "God is in the human being and a human being is God."[46] The Logos is the face of God, because in the incarnation the Logos revealed and made God known.[47] In another place, slightly paraphrasing Irenaeus, Clement introduces his deification exchange formula, "The Word of God became human being, that you may learn from human being how human being may become a god."[48] Christ is known to Clement as the educator, "deifying man by heavenly teaching, putting his laws into our minds, and writing them on our hearts."[49] With the Lord the human soul "studies to

40. *Strom*. 7.10.56.6; GCS 17: Clemens 3:41.
41. Choufrine, *Gnosis, Theophany, Theosis*, 179.
42. Ibid., 180.
43. *Strom*. 7.3. 13.1—14.1; GCS 17: Clemens 3:10; ANF 2:526.
44. Ibid., 6.12.104.2.
45. *Paed*. 3.1.2.1.
46. Ibid., 3.1.2.1; SVC 61:148.
47. Ibid., 1.7.57.2.
48. *Prot*. 1.8.4; SVC 34:15.
49. Ibid., 11.114.4; SVC 34:165; ANF 2:203–4. Cf. *Strom*. 7.2.6.1–3; *Paed*. 1.1.1–2.

be a god."[50] Clement understands salvation as an intellectual-mystical-contemplative-deifying process toward spiritual perfection, "true philosophy as transmitted through the Son."[51]

Human self-awareness in personal spiritual life, as well as in christological and ecclesiastical contexts, introduces an intricately conveyed metaphysical and cosmic aspect of deification, which to a significant degree parallels trinitarian interrelation. It should be noted that the metaphysical application of the deification theme by itself does not represent Clement's main contribution to the development of this notion in Christian theology. However, there we find, first, an unprecedented account of preserving the essential apophatic unity of God that is reconciled with divine unity and multiplicity of the universe. Second, it is an interesting solution to the Platonic tension between one and many that Clement laid down for us in an explicably Christian and trinitarian context.

If for Plato, in *Parmenides*, the notion of the One was more like a reflection on the paradoxes of language, for Clement it becomes a reflection on the paradoxes of God.[52] Thus, the mystery of the first person of the Trinity is portrayed as monad. Here we have a concept of God as a transcendent monad—One as one (ἕν ὡς ἕν), solitary unity without distinctions or intervals;[53] or the One who is more than one, One who supersedes any conception of oneness—the absolute, or ultimate, One. As Clement in one place says, "God is one, and he is more than one, beyond monad itself."[54] The Logos of God, our heavenly Teacher, is also monad, but in a different way.[55] The Son becomes an interesting point of both connection and distinction between one and many: "The Son is neither simply one thing as one thing, nor many things as parts, but one thing as all things; whence also he is all things. For he is the circle of all

50. *Strom*. 6.14.113.3; GCS 52 [15]: Clemens 2:488.

51. Ibid., 1.18.90.1; GCS 52 [15]: Clemens 2:58; FC 85:91.

52. Choufrine, *Gnosis, Theophany, Theosis*, 166.

53. *Strom*. 5.11.71.2, 5.12.81.6.

54. *Paed*. 1.8.71.1; SVC 61:44; FC 23:63 (modified).

55. The distinction between the first god, who is totally transcendent to human beings, and the second god, to whom humans can attain likeness, was already taught by the non-Christian philosopher Albinus in the second century (see Dillon, *Middle Platonists*, 282–85, 298–300). He could be the source for Clement (Russell, *Doctrine of Deification*, 135).

powers rolled and united into one unity. Wherefore the Word is called the Alpha and the Omega, of whom alone the end becomes beginning, and ends again at the original beginning without any break."[56]

The Logos-monad for Clement from the beginning is "one thing as all things."[57] If God the Father is without a beginning and an end, the Son is the beginning and the end of all things. It is an interesting approach to demonstrate the distinction of the Son from the Father and at the same time the eternity and unity of both. The Son is the "timeless and unoriginated first principle, and beginning of existences."[58] Divine transcendence of God the Father, as noetic monad (νοεῖται μονάς), can be comprehended only as spiritual-contemplative-intellectual ascent by a purified and illuminated mind, and only through the grace of the Son, God's own power. However, this knowledge is apophatic: we know not what God is, but what he is not.[59] Nevertheless, this revelation through the Son reveals a peculiarity, or specific property (ἰδιώματος), of the Father.[60]

Clement also weaves this understanding of "one as all things" into the christological context of *apocatastasis* as a return from many to one. This unification occurs both on personal and corporate levels. On a personal level "to believe in him [the Logos], and by him, is to become a unit [μοναδικόν], being indissolubly united in him; and to disbelieve is to be separated, disjoined, divided."[61] On a corporate level,

> Let us haste to salvation, to regeneration; let us who are many haste that we may be brought together into one love, according to the union of the essential unity [μοναδικῆς οὐσίας ἕνωσιν]; and let us, by being made good, conformably follow after union, seeking after the good Monad. The union of many in one, issuing in the production of divine harmony out of a medley of sounds and division, becomes one symphony following one

56. *Strom*. 4.25.156.2—157.1; GCS 52 [15]: Clemens 2:317–18; ANF 2:438. The Logos-centered concept of monad in Clement is opposed, for example, to the Carpocratian teaching of the Monad, where from the lonely Monad emanated the Idea, and from their intercourse materialized the universe (*Strom*. 3.2.5.3; see footnote 18 in FC 85:359).

57. Ibid., 7.1.2.2.

58. Ibid., 7.1.2.2; GCS 17: Clemens 3:4; ANF 2:523.

59. Ibid., 5.11.71.2–5, 5.12.81.3–82.3.

60. Ibid., 5.6.34.1; GCS 52 [15]: Clemens 2:348.

61. Ibid., 4.25.157.2; GCS 52 [15]: Clemens 2:318; ANF 2:438.

> choir-leader and teacher, the Word, reaching and resting in the same truth, and crying Abba, Father. This, the true utterance of his children, God accepts with gracious welcome—the firstfruits he receives from them.[62]

The process of deification in this case is the return from many to one or, more accurately, both individual and cosmic unification simultaneously, where a human being attains personal *monad*ified integrity, which is harmoniously incorporated into the metaphysical unity (deified oneness) of the whole universe. It is a monadic relationship of each and all with God through Christ as divine κοινωνία.

If the Logos manifests the fullness of all things and the meaningfulness of both teleological and metaphysical importance, the Holy Spirit is the illuminating source of cosmic harmony for many. The Holy Spirit "composed the universe into melodious order, and tuned the discord of the elements to harmonious arrangement, so that the whole world might become harmony."[63] Clement's appropriation of divine-human communication as a melodious enterprise presents an interesting and aesthetical view of the human-divine relationship as a symphonic ascending process for the achievement of divine harmony between God and the world. The new song of the Logos, as the result of divine philanthropy demonstrated in the incarnation, has a potential to regenerate corrupted humanity to a new glorious gentleness. In this song is concealed the soteriological and therapeutic potential of heavenly restoration, for both humanity and the cosmos. The Holy Spirit is assisting the Logos with

> harmoniously arranging these the extreme tones of the universe. And this deathless strain, the support of the whole and the harmony of all,—reaching from the center to the circumference, and from the extremities to the central part, has harmonized this universal frame of things . . . according to the paternal counsel of God . . . The Word of God . . . having tuned by the Holy Spirit the universe, and especially man,—who, composed of body and soul, is a universe in miniature, makes melody to God on this instrument . . . —a harp for harmony—a pipe by reason of the Spirit—a temple by reason of the word.[64]

62. *Prot*. 9.88.2–3; SVC 34:131; ANF 2:197.
63. Ibid., 1.5.1; SVC 34:8; ANF 2:172.
64. Ibid., 1.5.2–3; SVC 34:8–9; ANF 2:172.

The Holy Spirit, along with the Logos, is an active agent in the metaphysical approach to deification, "the Spirit being the energetic principle of the Word, as blood is of flesh."[65] The practical side of this process includes, for Clement, participation in the life and worship of the church and partaking in the sacraments.[66] Baptism in particular plays an important role. The metaphysical implication of baptism is the illumination work of the Holy Spirit. The effect of this illumination is not merely a revelation of the divine light, but the transformation of a human being and infusion of divine light that makes one capable of knowing God and obtaining eternal life. As Clement says, "Being baptized, we are illuminated; illuminated, we become sons; being made sons, we are made perfect; being made perfect, we are made immortal."[67] This free gift of God clears human spiritual vision and "enables us to behold divinity, with the help of the Holy Spirit who is poured forth from heaven upon us."[68] Using the Eucharistic analogy of wine mixed with water, Clement draws a parallel with the presence of the Holy Spirit in a human being that "leads us on to incorruption."[69] Our knowledge of God that comes through Christ also is the gift of the Holy Spirit. The Gnostic Christian, through divine grace, becomes self-sufficient and "knowing the sovereign will, . . . being brought into close contact with the almighty power, and earnestly desiring to be spiritual, through boundless love, he is united to the Spirit."[70] The Holy Spirit, the light of truth, "indivisibly divided to all," sanctifies by faith the human soul and body, and "clothes it with incorruption."[71] Decorated with virtue, the human soul becomes "a temple of the Holy Spirit."[72]

Because of the Logos, God's presence transparently penetrates throughout the world and fills it with divine meaningfulness. It is the task of true philosophers and Gnostic Christians to discern this meaning. There is a whole epistemological outline in Clement[73] describing

65. *Paed*. 2.2.19.4; SVC 61:79; ANF 2:242.
66. Ibid., 1.6; *Strom*. 6.14.113.3.
67. Ibid., 1.6.26.1; SVC 61:17; ANF 2:215.
68. Ibid., 1.6.28.1; SVC 61:18–19; FC 23:27–28.
69. Ibid., 2.2.20.1; SVC 61:79; FC 23:111.
70. *Strom*. 7.7.44.5; GCS 17: Clemens 3:33; ANF 2:535.
71. *Paed*. 2.10.109.3; *Strom*. 4.26.163.2, 6.16.138.2.
72. *Strom*. 7.11.64.7; GCS 17: Clemens 3:46; ANF 2:541.
73. See ibid., 6.17.

different forms and ways of comprehension (φρόνησις), but in this epistemological endeavour, the ultimate comprehension, which is "supreme and essential," is obtained through faith and is the manifestation of the Holy Spirit. The indwelling of the Holy Spirit in the human soul is the source of understanding of divine things and God, a transforming and regenerating agency, as well as the providential guide toward human teleological destination.[74]

A human being through Christ obtains personal unity and becomes one with Christ, "Now the Savior has taken away wrath in and with lust, wrath being lust of vengeance. For universally liability to feeling belongs to every kind of desire; and man, when deified [θεούμενος] purely into a passionless state, becomes a unit [μοναδικός]."[75] Similarly, the nature of the Church is monad, established "by the will of one God, through one Lord, into the unity of one faith . . . The pre-eminence of the Church, as the principle of union, is, in its oneness [κατὰ τὴν μονάδα ἐστίν], transcending all other things and having nothing like or equal to itself."[76] All faithful strive "to oneness [μονάδα] and to 'the unity [ἑνότητα] of the faith.'"[77] A Christian Gnostic is a small temple of God, "the temple is great, as the Church, and it is small, as the man," and God has his resting place in this person.[78] The temple is small, as a miniature universe that is replicated in every human individual, and as great as a divinely tuned cosmic choir. The person in whom God resides does not need anything else, because this individual has a good habitat and happy state of existence.[79] The eternal treasure offered to humanity is "fortified by the power of God the Father and the blood of God the Son and the dew of the Holy Spirit."[80]

Thus, this returning process from many to one, or *monad*ification of human beings, is nothing less than their obtainment of divine likeness that, in this instance, constitutes Clement's metaphysical aspect of deification, with trinitarian interrelation explicitly present. The entire

74. Cf. *Prot.* 11.112.3, 12.118.4; *Strom.* 2.2.7.3, 4.26.163.3, 5.4.25.4–5, 5.13.88.2–4, 6.15.126.1, 6.17.155.3–4, 7.2.9.4, 7.11.64.7, 7.14.87.1.

75. *Strom.* 4.23.152.1; GCS 52 [15]: Clemens 2:315; ANF 2:437.

76. Ibid., 7.17.107.5–6; GCS 17: Clemens 3:76; ANF 2:555 (modified).

77. Eph 4:13, *Strom.* 6.11.87.2; GCS 52 [15]: Clemens 2:475; ANF 2:500.

78. *Strom.* 7.13.82.4, GCS 17: Clemens 3:58; ANF 2:547.

79. Cf. *Prot.* 1.5.2–3.

80. *QDS* 34; LCL 92:342–43.

Trinity participates in the deifying process of a human being. In a way, the metaphysical aspect of deification provides a trinitarian outlook on the divine *oikonomia* for humanity, from its origin to its transformation into the likeness of God,

> Jesus, our Educator, has outlined for us true life, and that he educates the man who abides in Christ. His character is not excessively fear-inspiring, yet neither is it overindulgent in its kindness. He imposes commands, but at the same time expresses them in such a way that we can fullfill [*sic*] them.
>
> It seems to me that the reason that he formed man from dust with his own hands, gave him a second birth through water, increased through the Spirit, education by the Word, thereby guiding him surely to the adoption of sons and to salvation with holy precepts, was precisely that he might transform an earth-born man into a holy and heavenly creature by his coming, and accomplish the original divine command: 'Let us make mankind in our image and likeness.'[81] It is Christ, in fact, who is, in all its perfection, what God then commanded; other men are so only by a certain image.
>
> As for us, O children of a good Father, flock of a good Educator, let us fulfill the will of the Father, let us obey the Word, and let us be truly molded by the saving life of the Saviour. Then, since we shall already be living the life of heaven which makes us divine, let us anoint ourselves with never-fading oil of gladness, the incorruptible oil of good odor. We possess an unmistakable model of incorruptibility in the life of the Lord and are following in the footsteps of God.[82]

Clement's awareness of a human being, or precisely of the human mind, as a full member in the fellowship with all intelligible beings and with God is remarkable. It introduces a cosmic perspective to salvation where, through the individual unification of human spiritual properties, and through the redemptive and educative ministry of the Logos, human beings become one with themselves, but not reserved in self-reflection; they are one with other intelligible beings, one with the whole universe, and unified to God. This process of monadification brings with it certain aspects of unique personal integrity, where characteristics of indissoluble unity within God became applicable to

81. Gen 1:26.

82. *Paed*. 1.12.98.1–3; SVC 61:60–61; FC 23:86–87.

a deified human being, as one of Clement's applications of the likeness to God. It introduces the perspective of cosmic celestial immediacy in human participation in God, as well as the unique monadic harmony of the whole cosmos in the soteriological and trinitarian perspective. The entire creation is one symphony of the Holy Spirit, the symphony of divine paternal glory, where the Logos, Son of God, is the conductor. It is not only the return of many to one, but κοινωνία of many *as* one. This proper tuning of the universe is the work of the Holy Spirit. This interminable contemplation and coexistence with God transcends a human's current state of nature. The perfect Gnostic of Clement is "translated absolutely and entirely to another sphere" and "assimilated to God."[83]

However, in the context of cosmic unification, this assimilation to God does not imply absorption into God. It is not a negation of humanity, but rather a process of fulfilled humanhood, "promotion in glory."[84] It is the highest perfection that a human being can achieve, remaining human:

> The cause of these, then, is love, of all science the most sacred and most sovereign. For by the service of what is best and most exalted, which is characterized by unity, it renders the Gnostic at once friend and son, having in truth grown "a perfect man, up to the measure of full stature." Further, agreement in the same thing is consent. But what is the same is one. And friendship is consummated in likeness; the community lying in oneness. The Gnostic, consequently, in virtue of being a lover of the one true God, is the really perfect man and friend of God, and is placed in the rank of son. For these are names of nobility and knowledge, and perfection in the contemplation of God; which crowning step of advancement the gnostic soul receives, when it has become quite pure, reckoned worthy to behold everlastingly God Almighty, "face," it is said, "to face." For having become wholly spiritual, and having in the spiritual Church gone to what is of kindred nature, it abides in the rest of God.[85]

The historical view of salvation in Clement is complemented with the cosmic perspective, where both the concept of God, including the Trinity, and the human being in process of deification receive more mor-

83. *Strom*. 7.3.13.1–3; GCS 17: Clemens 3:10.

84. Ibid., 6.13.107.3.

85. *Strom*. 7.11.68; GCS 17: Clemens 3:49; ANF 2:542.

alizing and ascending significance when combined with structuralizing trinitarian and cosmic differentiation. God, the cosmos (the universe), and human beings become soteriologically interrelated and involved in metaphysical manifestation as a certain orderly stratification of various levels of existence and being. Soteriological significance of metaphysical perspective expands Christian understanding of individual salvation into a Christian cosmological worldview that not only explains the meaning of history as salvation history, but also gives the whole structure of the universe salvific importance, and at the same time becomes closely incorporated with the salvation of a human individual.

The deification theme in Clement and his view of the Trinity cannot be properly understood apart from his intellectual environment. Overall, his treatment of the deification theme and the Trinity itself is contextually interwoven into the fabric of his discourse, rather than constituting distinct and transparent theological topics. At the same time, those themes are strategically dispersed throughout his entire discourse, and they are not limited only to explicit deificational or trinitarian statements. They masterfully, if not always coherently, are incorporated in the edifice of his theology as one of the main foundational principles that help to tie the whole discourse together. In other words, they constitute Clement's worldview as the theocentrically trinitarian, deific and deiforming structure.

If there is no question that Clement was significantly influenced by the Alexandrian Hellenistic milieu, it is also true that "he infuses into it a Christian soul,"[86] and his intellectual endeavours contribute both to the development of Middle Platonism and Christian theology.

86. Gross, *Divinization*, 132.

4

Basil of Caesarea and the Cappadocians on the Distinction between Essence and Energies in God and Its Relevance to the Deification Theme

Vladimir Kharlamov

In *Ep*. 234 Basil responds to the Neoarian charge that advocating the incomprehensibility of God, more specifically the incomprehensibility of God's essence, leads to ignorance of the object of worship.[1] In other words, people like Basil do not know and understand whom they worship. In the context of this letter Basil introduces the distinction between the knowability of God's energies and the unknowability of God's essence. Basil remarks, "From His [God's] activities [ἐνεργειῶν] we know our God, but His substance [οὐσίᾳ] itself we do not profess to approach. For His activities [ἐνέργειαι] descend to us, but His substance [οὐσία] remains inaccessible [ἀπρόσιτος]."[2] Overall, Basil does not dwell on this distinction significantly in his polemics against Neoarians, neither does he state it anywhere else with the same transparency, apart from this letter. If it were not for the theological significance this distinction would acquire in the fourteenth-century during the Hesychast controversy and subsequently in the Neopalamite understanding of deification, its importance for Basil's treatment of the deification theme would seem to be merely peripheral. The content of this letter does not deal specifically with deification, nor does Basil employ the distinction between divine essence and energy/energies in God elsewhere in the context of deification. Nevertheless, it is the reference

1. Cf. Basil, *Eun*. 1.8; SC 299:192.
2. *Ep*. 234.1; Basil, *Letters* vol. 3, LCL 243:372–73.

here that places Basil in a prominent place for the later Byzantine and modern Neopalamite understanding of deification.

In this essay I will attempt to analyze the significance of the Palamite essence/energy distinction for Basil and for Cappadocian thought in general by responding to claims made for the presence of this distinction in their theology and by examining them predominantly in terms of the historical context of the late fourth-century anti-Eunomian polemic and the development of the deification theme during that time. The Cappadocians are often listed as unquestionable supporters of this distinction, which I find rather misleading. I neither deny the historical continuity from the Cappadocians to Gregory Palamas nor do I necessarily object to the legitimacy of the essence/energy distinction in Palamas; however, I do not think that the polemical environment and the theological objectives that they faced allows for putting them together in the same boat. Terminological similarities, overarching themes and categories taken out the actual historical context in which Basil and Gregories wrote do not necessarily presuppose conceptual univocality with later development of patristic and Byzantine thought.

After a brief overview of Palamism and particular emphasis on the essence/energy distinction in Neopalamism I will discuss claims proposed to sanction this distinction as a normative element of Cappadocian theology. Then I will review the role of *energeia* in the Cappadocian trinitarian discourse and to their general application of *energeia* terminology. The final part of this essay will deal with the importance of the notion of participation in the divine for the Cappadocians in the context of God's essential incomprehensibility and human theosis.

I

In Gregory Palamas (1296–1359), uncreated energies accumulatively define all that is participable and communicable about God. They are distinct from the divine essence, which always remains entirely inaccessible. This *ousia*/*energeiai* distinction for Palamas attempts to explain the human ability to participate in God with the subsequent achievement of theosis, and at the same time to preserve the incomprehensibility and impracticability of God in his essence. Energies reveal God himself without revealing God-in-himself. Energies simply make the reality of God present to human participation and understanding, placing an on-

tological differentiation within God that renders the interiority of God imparticipable and absolutely incomprehensible.[3] In other words, this distinction refers to the objective reality of God within himself. It is not a distinction from a human point of view (not simply a notional or epistemological distinction), but a real distinction in the being of God.[4] This distinction receives dogmatic and normative theological affirmation from a number of "Palamite" Councils in Constantinople (1341, 1347, 1351, 1368), ultimately earning Palamas the prestigious title of "the doctor of the uncreated energies." According to Kallistos Ware, of these councils "the most important doctrinally is the Council of 1351."[5]

Although Anna Williams attempts to argue that for Palamas, this essence/energy distinction in God was "a very minor component" in the context of his main theological concerns,[6] it nevertheless preserves the central doctrinal prominence in the Neopalamite discourse. Vladimir Lossky, the founder of modern Neopalamism,[7] vigorously argues that the failure to recognize the distinction between God's essence and energies is the failure to understand the true meaning behind the Christian notion of deification.[8] The full significance of this distinction, however, goes beyond the theme of deification itself. The distinction is presented as a crucial dogmatic demarcation of the ultimate truth of Eastern Orthodox theology. From the Orthodox perspective, it addresses, especially in its more radicalized form, the cardinal flaw and fallacy of

3. "Ontological" in this context is used cautiously for the lack of a better term. In the post Pseudo-Dionysian and Palamite understanding of God, who is beyond being or non-being, anything "ontological" cannot be strictly applicable to God, especially to the inner reality of God.

4. Ware, "God Hidden and Revealed," 134, see esp. ibid., 136.

5. Ibid., 129. For this council's theological summary of the Eastern Orthodox perspective on the essence/energy distinction in God see ibid., 130–32.

6. Williams, "Light from Byzantium," 483–96, esp. 494–96.

7. Lossky shares this honor together with Georges Florovsky.

8. Lossky, *Mystical Theology*, ch. 4, esp. 69–71. See also Meyendorf, *Byzantine Theology*, 186–88; Meyendorf, *Study of Gregory Palamas*, 157–84, esp. 175–78. For a fuller discussion and critique see Finch, "Sanctity as Participation," 10–106; and for shorter presentation of his dissertation argument, Finch, "Neo-Palamism," 233–49. For a discussion of Lossky's theology in modern Orthodox thought including contextualization of his essence/energy distinction see Papanikolaou, *Being with God*, esp. 24–30, 63–65.

the Roman Catholic theology in general, and Thomism in particular.[9] As Christos Yannaras said, "The problem of the distinction between essence and energies determined definitely and finally the differentiation of the Latin West from the Orthodox East."[10] The problem, according to Yannaras, is even worse than that. The inability of the West, mislead by Augustine (and subsequently by Scholasticism), to recognize this distinction helped to plant heresy, atheism, and rationalism in the West.[11]

From the early stages of the Hesychast controversy, apart from political factors, the main theological debate was situated in the context

9. However, it should be noted that the issue of Thomism or the Scholastic method in general were not the main part of the original hesychast controversy in the fourteenth-century. John Meyendorff points out about Palamas's opponents, "it is important to stress once more that neither Barlaam, nor Akindynos, nor Nicephorus Gregoras were directly influenced by Latin thought" (Meyendorff, *Study of Gregory Palamas*, 204). The Palamite controversy and its initial aftermath, which is not the case with modern Neopalamism, more properly ought to be viewed as an exclusively intra-Byzantine affair rather than confrontation between Eastern and Western theological patterns, Meyendorff, "Les débuts de la controverse hésychaste," 90–96. See also discussion of Barlaam's anti-Latin treatises in Gerhard Podskalsky, *Theologie und Philosophie in Byzanz*, 124–73. Besides, neither Barlaam nor Palamas were entirely free from Augustinian influence. For a critical assessment of the role of Augustine and his use by Palamas and Barlaam see Flogaus, "Palamas and Barlaam Revisited," 1–32. See also Ware, "Scholasticism and Orthodoxy," 25–26.

10. Yannaras, "Distinction Between Essence and Energies," 242. Categorical emphasis on the importance of this Palamite essence/energy distinction in Orthodox understanding of divine-human communion and soteriology, however, is not the univocal perspective in contemporary Orthodox theology. John Zizioulas gives preference to the role of hyspostatic trinitarian divisions with predominant emphasis on the union of divine and human natures in Christ. Zizioulas' concern is not with divine energies, but with divine hypostasis as the ground where divine-human communion is realized. (See Papanikolaou's book *Being with God* and his article "Divine Energies or Divine Personhood," 357–85). John Manoussakis concurs with Zizioulas' view, "When God reveals Himself He first and foremost reveals His Personhood, that is, He reveals that He is a personal being who wills to make Himself known but He also reveals 'something about his nature': not the whatness (essence) but the howness (existence), as a Trinity of Persons" (Manoussakis, "Theophany and Indication," 84). In this approach Zizioulas is closer to the Cappadocians than Palamas. Even in the *Philokalia*, the manual of the Hesychast tradition, as Collins notes, "the fourteenth-century Hesychast writings occupy no more than a quarter of the collection of the texts and the Hesychast texts chosen contain little about the experience of divine light and the essence-energies distinction associated with the Hesychast controversy" (Collins, *Partaking in Divine Nature*, 90).

11. Yannaras, "Orthodoxy and West," 286–300; cf. Yannaras, "Distinction Between Essence and Energies," 243–45. David Bradshaw reaches similar dire conclusions at the end of his book *Aristotle East and West*, 275–77.

of seemingly Aristotelian epistemology, which claimed that, through intellectual effort—analytical and syllogistic reasoning—the human mind can come to what can be knowable about God, and reach the state of divine likeness.[12] To this, Palamas, by no means an enemy of Aristotle,[13] proposes the idea of direct divine illumination that enables a human being to participate in the divine life. The strict practice of asceticism provides an environment necessary to engender love, and leads to proper contemplation of God. However, if the epistemological issue was important for the debate between Palamas and Barlaam the Calabrian, and often became the climax point of Neopalamite critique of Thomism, it was not central for the further development of the controversy. Even for Barlaam, as for some earlier Byzantine opponents of hesychastic practice, the kernel of what was viewed as an innovation or even heretical distortion of proper spiritual experience is not the issue of asceticism in its advancement to human participation in God, but the claim made by hesychasts that their practice leads to the perceptible to senses theophany of divine uncreated light. This claim in Hesychasm was cleverly explained at the expense of the emphasis that traditional patristic mysticism of Gregory of Nyssa, Evagrius, Pseudo-Dionysius, and Maximus the Confessor, among others makes on the significance of free from senses spiritual/intellectual ascent to God, while at the same time invoking these patristic authorities in support of the hesychastic cause.[14]

Therefore, even after Barlaam was out of the picture, Palamas's explanation of *how* a human being is transformed through the experience of God in theosis met strong opposition from some of Palamas's initial supporters and friends. Laying the groundwork for theological justification of the Hesychast idea of the Taboric light of the Transfiguration, Palamas emphasizes that this light is not a symbolic, but a particularly

12. For the concise, but detailed, assessment of the Palamite controversy and the role of deification see Russell, "Theosis and Gregory Palamas," 357–79; cf. Mantzarides, "Tradition and Renewal," 1–18. See also Williams, "Light from Byzantium," 483–96.

13. According to John McGuckin, Palamas "studied in a curriculum shaped heavily by Aristotelian principles and governed by the formal disciplines of rhetoric, physics, and logic" (McGuckin, "Gregory Palamas [1296–1359]," 137). See also Phougias, "Prelude of Helleno-Byzantine Humanism," 9.

14. For critical assessment of the rise of hesychastic tradition in Byzantine monasticism with its culmination in the Plamate controversy see Krausmüller, "The Rise of Hesychasm," 101–26.

self-subsistent enhypostatic reality of the transcendent God, and therefore in a perceptible form representing divinity, and enabling human participation in God. Palamas asserts that this light, at times physically visible in the mystical experience of the illuminated ascetic saint, transforms a human being into a deified "uncreated by grace" state.[15] The rationalization behind this point of view was postulated in the distinction between the divine essence, which is supra-transcendent and absolutely imparticipable, and the divine energies, which occasionally are also termed by Palamas as "divinities." Participating in the divine energies, a deified human being—through the sharing in the attributes of God—by grace becomes fully one with God (*homotheoi*), without beginning and without end.[16] As Russell observes, "By the mid-fourteenth century there was scarcely a layman, let alone a monk or a bishop, who had not taken up a position on the Palamite view of theosis and the theology it entailed."[17]

As at the time of the Hesychast controversy, in modern scholarship we can observe a similar polarity of defenders and critics. Among staunch defenders of Palamism are Vladimir Lossky,[18] John Meyendorff,[19] and Christos Yannaras,[20] just to name a few. In the context of Vladimir Lossky, the authority of Palamas additionally provides him with an apparatus not only to demonstrate deficiencies of Neothomism, but also to deal with the sophiology of Fr. Sergei Bulgakov.[21] In this instance,

15. Palamas, *Triads* 3.1.31; Palamas, *Answer to Akindynos*, 3.6.15. Cf. Mantzaridis, *The Deification of Man*, 42–43; Anastos, "Gregory Palamas' Radicalization," 343–44.

16. Palamas, *On Divine Energy*, 36–37. For the discussion of the essence/energy distinction in Palamas see Hussey, "The Persons," 22–43; Mantzaridis, *The Deification of Man*, 105–15; Meyendorff, *Study of Gregory Palamas*, 202–27; Ware, "God Hidden and Revealed," 125–36.

17. Russell, "Theosis and Gregory Palamas," 358.

18. See especially Lossky, *Mystical Theology* (originally published in French in 1944); and Lossky, *Vision of God* (originally published in French in 1962).

19. See especially Meyendorff, *Study of Gregory Palamas*. Originally published in French as *Introduction à l'étude de Grégoire Palamas* (Paris: Editions du Seuil, 1959).

20. Yannaras, "Distinction Between Essence and Energies," 232–45. See also Lot-Borodine, *La déification*; Florovsky, "St. Gregory Palamas," 105–20; Mantzaridis, *Deification of Man* (originally published in Greek in 1963). For more recent expression of this view see Van Rossum, "Deification in Palamas and Aquinas," 365–82; for more balanced and far more developed form of pro-Palamite argument see Bradshaw, *Aristotle East and West*.

21. Lossky, *Spor o Sofii* [The Controversy about Sophia] (in Russian).

Lossky is fighting "heresy" both within and without using the hammer of Palamism. It is hard to exaggerate the importance that is assigned to the essence/energies distinction in God in Neopalamism. Yannaras emphasizes, "The acceptance or rejection of this distinction will determine either the abstract or the real character of theological knowledge, the attribution of theological truths to either rational certainty or existential experience."[22]

Among critics, Endre von Ivanka[23] and Rowan Williams[24] persuasively attempted to show significant Neoplatonic influence on Palamas, and a lack of evidence for the presence of this distinction in the patristic theology preceding Palamas. As for the latter, Williams concludes, "Palamas's distinction has no more than verbal parallels in earlier theology."[25] For the former, Palamas's dependence on Pseudo-Dionysius makes the presence of Neoplatonic influence quite obvious. In this regard, it is interesting to mention Eric Perl.[26] He undertakes the apologetic metaphysical examination of Palamas's teaching. His argument does not differ significantly from Lossky's and Meyendorff's, but rather builds on their less than thorough metaphysical defense of Palamism; however, Perl is more friendly toward Bulgakov. Perl is very critical of Ivanka and Williams. He is eager to show deficiencies of Neoplatonism and of Aquinas, but Perl is quite correct to see in Palamas the further, perhaps not intentional, development of Neoplatonism, similar to what can be observed in Pseudo-Dionysius. As Perl remarks,

> Palamas' doctrine is genuinely Neoplatonic, far more so than Thomism, in two vital and inseparable points: the realist understanding of the divine ideas, and the view of them, and therefore of God as "the very forms, the true being, of creatures." But St. Gregory maintains this position not by adopting a theory of mean terms but by working out the intrinsic requirements of the idea of participation. His doctrine is thus a real philosophical development of Neoplatonism, on internally necessary lines. It brings to full prominence the antinomy which was already implicit in the Neoplatonic theory of participation. This devel-

22. Yannaras, "Distinction Between Essence and Energies," 232.
23. von Ivanka, "Hellenisches im Hesychasmus," 491–500.
24. Williams, "Philosophical Structures of Palamism," 27–44.
25. Ibid., 44.
26. Perl, "Gregory Palamas," 105–30.

> opment was carried out by Ps.-Dionysius, and it is his doctrine that St. Gregory reiterates and expounds.[27]

To some degree, Perl actually indirectly confirms the conclusion of Williams, who sees in Palamism the "unhappy marriage of Aristotelialean and Neoplatonic systems."[28] Both Aristotelian, and especially Neoplatonic, elements already can be seen in Pseudo-Dionysius, to whom Palamas was greatly indebted.[29]

Among other critics of Palamism, Jeffrey Finch must be mentioned. Finch conclusively shows that the distinction between essence and energy in God is not traceable theologically in Ante-Nicene fathers and Athanasius.[30] There are also some attempts to smooth the intensity of Neopalamite extremes. For example, in her thorough study, Anna Williams concludes that there is more common ground between Aquinas and Palamas then divergence, and "even their divergences do not reveal diametrical opposition."[31]

It is not, however, one of the objectives of this essay to engage in detailed analysis of the Palamite theology, or to argue for the legitimacy or illegitimacy of this distinction in Palamism. The scope of Palamism and its influence covers significantly more territory than merely the issue of deification, even though theosis is the central tenet of Palamism. As far as deification in Palamas is concerned, it is hard to disagree with Russell's conclusion that Palamas's "version of theosis . . . among the intellectuals for whom it was intended . . . remained—and still remains—

27. Ibid., 129–30.

28. Williams, "Philosophical Structures of Palamism," 41. Cf. Flogaus, "Palamas and Barlaam Revisited," 8–10.

29. The influence of Neoplatonism on Pseudo-Dionysius is consensually accepted by his friends and critics, for Aristotelian elements see, for example, Perl's other work: Perl, *Theophany*, 35–39. The implicit Neoplatonic logic behind the Palamite essence/energy distinction manifests itself even in Bradshaw's assessment of the evidence for this distinction in Gregory of Nyssa. It makes Bradshaw inevitably to see a close parallelism between Nyssa and Iamblichus (Bradshaw, *Aristotle East and West*, 177–78). For evidence of essence/energy distinction in Neoplatonism and in Eunomius see, for example, Barnes, *Δύναμις in Gregory of Nyssa*, 102–3, 189–91.

30. Finch, "Sanctity as Participation."

31. Williams, *Ground of Union*, 175. See also Marshall, "Action and Person," 379–408. For more general comparison of Eastern and Western views see Congar, "Deification," 217–31.

controversial."[32] The concern here is not to resolve tensions inherited or related to Palamism, but to see how relevant the distinction between the divine *ousia* and *energeiai* that Basil states in *Ep*. 234.1 to both his, and to the overall Cappadocian, treatment of the deification theme.

II

Our first question is whether the distinction between the divine *ousia* and *energeiai* is a normative element of Cappadocian theology. David Bradshaw in his book *Aristotle East and West: Metaphysics and the Division of Christendom* discusses a set of arguments which support, or at least indicate, the initial development of the pro-Palamite understanding of the distinction between God's *ousia* and *energeia/energeiai* in the Cappadocians.[33] It is the most recent comprehensive summary on this issue in Neopalamite theology.

Bradshaw sees in Gregory of Nyssa the identification of God's names, including the term "god," with *energeiai* that is present in some of Gregory's works. The affirmation of this identification unsurprisingly suggests for him the distinction between essence and energies in God.[34] Bradshaw also correctly points out that Gregory is not always consistent in implementing this identification, but nevertheless, this does not significantly, in his opinion, contradict the main theological idea behind it.[35]

Bradshaw accurately indicates that acceptance of this identification of divine energies with divine names makes it inadequate to view *energeiai* as simply activities or operations, and raises the issue of proper understanding of how they are distinct from the divine essence. In the sense of energies, Bradshaw states, "For Gregory of Nyssa the divine names are not merely derived from the *energeiai* but are names *of* the *energeiai*. The natural conclusion to draw is that the *energeiai* are not

32. Russell, "Theosis and Gregory Palamas," 379.

33. Bradshaw, *Aristotle East and West*, 161–72; for synopsis of his book's main argument with particular attention to the Cappadocians see also his "Concept of Divine Energies," 93–120.

34. Bradshaw, *Aristotle East and West*, 161–64. Cf. Krivocheine, "Simplicity of Divine Nature," 83–88.

35. Bradshaw, *Aristotle East and West*, 163–64 and footnote 39.

merely activities, but must in some sense be God Himself." And it is "God Himself under some nameable aspect or form."[36]

Other evidence that the *energeiai* are not merely divine operations, but in some sense God himself, and at the same time distinct from divine essence, Bradshaw finds in common for the Cappadocians a distinction between God as he is revealed to us, and the essence of God that remains beyond our reach.[37] Further indication for the distinction of divine essence and energies Bradshaw sees in a number of references from both Gregories, when they speak about "things around the divine nature."[38] In Bradshaw's opinion, the Gregories, under "things around the divine nature," understand divine energies. He also discovers support for this distinction in Gregory of Nazianzus's exegesis of Exod 33:18–23. There, God, responding to Moses's request to show him divine glory, says, "You shall see my back; but my face shall not be seen" because it is impossible to see the face of God and remain alive. In the *Second Theological Oration*, Gregory referring to his personal mystical experience draws on this biblical passage:

> I was running to lay hold on God, and thus I went up into the Mount, and drew aside the curtain of the Cloud, and entered away from matter and material things, and as far as I could I withdrew within myself. And then when I looked up, I scarce saw the back parts of God; although I was sheltered by the Rock, the Word that was made flesh for us. And when I looked a little closer, I saw, not the First and unmingled Nature, known to Itself—to the Trinity, I mean; not That which abideth within the first veil, and is hidden by the Cherubim; but only that Nature, which at last even reaches to us. And that is, as far as I can learn, the Majesty, or as holy David calls it, the Glory which is manifested among the creatures, which It has produced and governs. For these are the Back Parts of God, which He leaves behind Him, as tokens of Himself like the shadows and reflection of the sun in the water, which shew the sun to our weak eyes, because we cannot look at the sun himself, for by his unmixed light he is too strong for our power of perception.[39]

36. Ibid., 165. Emphasis is his.

37. Ibid., 166. Basil's *Ep*. 234.1 is mentioned under this category.

38. Bradshaw, *Aristotle East and West*, 166–67. Cf. Krivocheine, "Simplicity of Divine Nature," 88–90.

39. *Or*. 28.3; SC 250:104–6; NPNF 2 7:289.

In Bradshaw's opinion, "The reference to 'the nature which at last even reaches to us' indicates that we are dealing here with the same distinction as in Basil."[40]

Additional attestation for the distinction between God-in-himself and God who "reached down even to human nature" Bradshaw finds in Gregory of Nyssa's image of the burning bush theophany of God to Moses, contextualized in Bradshaw's understanding of Nyssa's identification of divine names with energies. Nyssa remarks, "This truth, which was then manifested by the ineffable and mysterious illumination which came to Moses, is God . . . For if truth is God and truth is light—the Gospel testifies by these sublime and divine names to the God who made himself visible to us in the flesh—such guidance of virtue leads us to know that light which reached down even to human nature."[41]

If we exclusively rely on textual references provided by Bradshaw, it is possible to come to an impression that in the Cappadocians there is some development that contributed to what later theologically materialized in the Palamite distinction between the divine *ousia* and *energeiai*. However, in the general context of their theological contribution, and in the light of other textual evidence, it seems that the distinction between the essence and energies in God is not one of their theological concerns, even if it is a concern for them at all. The Cappadocian testimony to this distinction, at the very least, is inconclusive, and more likely *accidental*. It is certainly inconclusive in the Palamite sense. It is not my objective to conduct exhaustive textual analysis of all relevant references, but simply to demonstrate by some examples that the evidence for the essence/energies distinction in God for the Cappadocians is far from apparent.

I think it is safe to assert that in the Cappadocians such terms as "nature (φύσις)," "archetype (πρωτότῠπος and ἀρχέτῠπος)" in the reference to God and "godhead (θεότης)" and "god (θεός)" presuppose relation to the reality of God that deal not only with divine properties, powers, attributes, or energies, as Bradshaw suggests,[42] but often indicate some reference to God's essence, even in some instances are synonymous with God's essence.[43]

40. Bradshaw, *Aristotle East and West*, 168. Reference to Basil, *Ep*. 234.1.

41. *Vit. Mos*. 2.19–20; GNO 7/1:38–39; Gregory of Nyssa, *Life of Moses*, 59.

42. Bradshaw, *Aristotle East and West*, 163–64.

43. Contos also acknowledges that even in Palamas such terms as "God" and "Deity (Godhead)" can be "applied in common to the divine nature, the powers, the energies, the persons." Contos, "Essence-Energies Structure," 290–91, 293.

First let us consider whether the Cappadocians use *ousia* and *physis* as synonyms. There is some evidence to suggest that when the Cappadocians use *ousia*, they mean God's totally transcendent and unknowable substantive being, but in their reference to *physis*, they mean the sum of characteristics or attributes or *energeiai*. For example, Bethune-Baker observes, "The main idea of Basil, as of the other Cappadocians, is that the οὐσία of the Godhead cannot be understood, but that its attributes and 'nature' may be known from revelation; and this being so they speak more readily of the φύσις, which can be known in some measure, as that in which the community of life in the Holy Trinity consists."[44] Bethune-Baker correctly acknowledges the synonymic, if not always consistent, correlation between "godhead" and "essence" in the Cappadocian, and affirms the possibility of some knowledge of divine nature.[45] The weakness of his argument for the distinction between "essence" and "nature" is (and as Hansons notes, "Bethune-Baker admits this") that there are a number of references where both terms are used together as synonyms, especially in Basil.[46]

If we follow the logic of Bradshaw's argument, and think that, for Gregory of Nyssa, the name "God" always presupposes the reference to divine *energeia*, but not the *ousia*, Bradshaw's characteristic of the deeper meaning of the *energeiai*, the one that is above a simple understanding of energy as activity, is valid. The only concern that can be expressed here is that we end up with an absolutely unknowable God,[47] who is so transcendent in his *ousia* that we do not even know that he has one. This might presuppose some semi-Buddhist interpretation of divine reality by the Cappadocian fathers. Bradshaw's reading of the Cappadocians makes more sense in the light of the Pseudo-Dionysian Neoplatonic understanding of God as "non-being;" God, who transcends ontologically, metaphysically, and epistemologically any essence. For that matter, even the *ousia* of God can be seen as energy.[48] By accepting such assertions literally and not as polemical overstatements, it will obliterate any

44. Bethune-Baker, *Meaning of Homoousios*, 50.

45. For the discussion of the Cappadocians see ibid., 49–59.

46. Ibid., 51–52. See, for example, Basil, *Hex*. 1.8 and *Ep*. 38.4 (ascribed to Gregory of Nyssa). Cf. Hanson, *Search for Christian Doctrine*, 697–98.

47. The term "God" in this instance can be applicable only nominally.

48. This is certainly true in case of Palamas, see, for example, *Triads* 3.2.11. Cf. Anastos, "Gregory Palamas' Radicalization," 346–47.

discourse about God not only with regard to his essence, but also his energies. There is more of a sense of actual reality of divine being and of divine essence in the Cappadocians that allows them to speak about God in terms of an ontological Being.[49]

When Basil argues against Eunomius's claim that there should be a definitive way to identify the essence of God, he indicates that no single name can express the core of divine essence, but those names, nevertheless, according to Basil, facilitate a sufficient, though not precise, understanding of what God has and what he does not have.[50] In a sense, divine names point to the essence of God, and "the essence" of God, Basil says, "is not something that does not belong to God, but the very being of God."[51] Even when one thinks about God the Father as Light, then, Basil says, "the essence of Only-begotten is accordingly acknowledged as Light."[52] In *Adversus Eunomium*, Basil does not refrain from speaking about characteristics, properties, attributes, or qualities (ἰδιότης and ἰδίωμα) of God's essence.[53] Holiness is the nature of the Holy Spirit, and this holiness equally is a natural (essential) property of all three Persons of the Trinity.[54] Basil also acknowledges in the identification of power in the Father and the Son the identity in their essence. Because the Son is identical to the Father in power (δύναμις), he also is identical to the Father in essence, where this identity is described in terms of commonly shared essential, but not energetic, simplicity and uncompoundedness/indivisibility, equally ascribed and shared by both, the Father and the Son. Identity in activity cannot be without identity in nature.[55] In another place, Basil states, "If the essence and the power are identical, then what designates the power in the same way also designates the essence."[56] From human understanding of divine power and simplicity, it is possible to arrive at some understanding of divine incomprehensible essence. For "if there is nothing that allows us to

49. See, for example, Gregory of Nyssa, *Vit. Mos*. 2.23–25.
50. *Eun*. 1.10; SC 299:204. Cf. Gregory of Nyssa, *Or. Cat*. 1.
51. *Eun*. 1.10; SC 299:206.
52. *Eun*. 1.19; SC 299:240.
53. *Eun*. 1.18. See also *Eun*. 2.5.
54. *Eun*. 3.2–3; cf. *Spir*. 18.47, Gregory of Nazianzus, *Or*. 23.11.
55. *Eun*. 1.23.
56. *Eun*. 2.32; SC 305:134.

characterize the essence [in God], no one may come to its cognition,"[57] or basically to the confession that God has an essence.

In one of his letters, Basil equates divine nature with the Godhead as a unique characteristic of all three Persons of the Trinity, "For of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy [Spirit] the nature [φύσις] is the same, and the Godhead [θεότης] is one."[58] Gregory of Nyssa does the same as he remarks, "the term 'godhead' does signify nature . . . But I do not understand how those who are ready to invent anything cite the term 'godhead' as indicating the objects of nature."[59] In this letter, Gregory also uses synonymously the terms φύσις and οὐσία. Similarly, Gregory of Nyssa sees the name "God" as one that signifies the essence, therefore when we confess the one essence in all three Persons of the Trinity, we declare one God. Because it is one *ousia*, therefore it is one name "God" that is used.[60] In short, as we do not find a consistently applied difference in the Cappadocian use of such terms as *ousia* and *physis*, neither are they consistent in differentiating the intrinsic characteristics of the essence in God from divine attributes, powers and energies, and, thus, from such terms as "godhead," "god," and "archetype." In some sense, essence and energy can both receive the same name: "Identity of activities indicates community of nature. Therefore, if Godhead be the name of activity, as we assert that there is one activity of Father and Son and Holy Spirit, and that in this sense there is one Godhead: or if, according to the opinion of the many, the name of "godhead" is indicative of a nature, since we find no difference in their nature, not without reason do we define the Holy Trinity as of one Godhead."[61]

In the Cappadocians the divine *ousia*, nature, godhead, and archetype are not above the Persons of the Trinity, but are the very constitutive aspects of how human beings can refer to the Being of God. The conformity of human beings to who God is constitutes the foundation and the content of human deification. Gregory of Nyssa in the case of Moses epitomizes: "The person who by every means achieves

57. *Eun*. 2.29; SC 305:122.

58. *Ep*. 210.4; Basil, *Letters* vol. 3, LCL 243:205–7. Cf. Gregory of Nyssa, *Trin*. GNO 3/1:15.

59. (Pseudo)-Basil, *Ep*. 189.7–8, Basil, *Letters* vol. 3, LCL 243:66–67. This letter is ascribed to Gregory of Nyssa.

60. *Ad Graecos*, GNO 3/1:19.

61. Gregory of Nyssa (Pseudo-Basil), *Ep*. 189.8; Basil, *Letters* vol. 3, LCL 243:68–69.

incorruption in his whole life admits no corruption in himself. For he who has truly come to be in the image of God and who has in no way turned aside from the divine character [τοῦ θείου χαρακτῆρος] bears in himself its distinguishing marks and shows in all things his conformity to the archetype [τῇ ὁμοιώσει πρὸς τὸ ἀρχέτυπον]; he beautifies his own soul with what is incorruptible, unchangeable, and shares in no evil at all."[62]

In regard to Bradshaw's identification of divine names with divine energies, it is interesting to point out that Lossky, in what was probably his earliest published essay, also draws attention to this issue, but from a different angle. If, in a general perspective on the essence/energies distinction, Lossky and Bradshaw are in agreement, their assessment of the historical evidence occasionally leads them to different interpretations. In Lossky's view, Gregory of Nyssa, responding to the claim of Eunomius about human ability to know the essence of God, fully denies the presence of any reality behind divine names and finds in them "only artificial denominators." The conclusion Lossky reaches is that this occasional polemical extreme in Nyssa overall does not correspond to "the spirit of the teaching of the great Cappadocians . . . Gregory of Nyssa, in addition to asserting the absolute incomprehensibility of God that leads to nominalism in the issue about divine names, also develops the thought of Saints Basil the Great and Gregory of Nazianzus about theophany (appearance of God), where he is approaching to the resolution of the contradiction between incomprehensible Essence [of God] and divine names as having real significance."[63] The main point Lossky makes here, however, is not related to the Palamite distinction, but to the assertion that, prior to Pseudo-Dionysius, the apophatic theology was not conclusively expressed by the Cappadocians. What is important here is the evidence of certain ambiguity in Nyssa's treatment of divine names. It allows Lossky to interpret Nyssa's view as suggesting nominalism, but Bradshaw finds there support for the essence/energies distinction in God.

Bradshaw suggests that for Gregory of Nyssa divine names are the names of the *energeiai* and in this identification they point to the

62. *Vit. Mos*. 2.318; GNO 7/1:143; Gregory of Nyssa, *Life of Moses*, 136.

63. Lossky, "Apofaticheskoe bogoslovie" [Apophatic Theology], 100–101. As proof texts in Nyssa, Lossky, rather broadly, refers to *De beatit*. 6 and *Vit. Mos*. (PG 44:298–430).

nameable aspects of God himself that go beyond God's activity *ad extra*.[64] If this is the case then, it is unclear what would prohibit someone from understanding these divine nameable aspects in terms of divine substance or being? Gregory of Nazianzus, for example, is very clear: "God cannot be named," however, as he explains, God cannot be named only in a sense that there is no one name that can expresses the fullness of who God is. There are some names that are "in some special way names of his essence [οὐσίας ὀνόματα]." One of those names is "God." God's other names fall into two categories: the first category "belongs to his power [ἐξουσίας], the second to his providential ordering of the world [οἰκονομίας]."[65] Hypostatic names of the Trinity carry even more expressed significance in disclosing the nature of God. In the name "Logos" for the Son, Gregory understands not only consubstantiality between the Father and the Son, but epistemologically connoted revealed relationship. The Logos is the definition of the Father's nature in some comprehensible form present in and open for understanding.

> He [the Son] is "Word [Λόγος],"[66] because he is related to the Father as word is to mind, not only by reason of the undistributed character of his birth, but also through the connection and declaratory function involved in the relationship. One could say too, perhaps, that his relationship is that of definition to term defined, since "word" has the meaning in Greek of "definition." He who has known the Son ("seen" means "known" in that context) has known the Father.[67] The Son is the concise and simple revelation of the Father's nature [Πατρὸς φύσεως]—everything born is a tacit definition of its parent. You would not be wrong, were you to explain the name from the fact that he exists inherently in real things.[68]

If the Cappadocians, as Bradshaw indicates, accept the idea of God as intrinsically active[69] why then do the divine energies have to be identified with God himself but at the same time separated from God-in-himself? Why cannot divine power and energy be viewed as

64. See above, Bradshaw, *Aristotle East and West*, 165.

65. *Or*. 30.17–19; SC 250:260–66; *Faith Gives Fullness*, 273–75.

66. John 1:1.

67. John 14:9; cf. Matt 11:27.

68. *Or*. 30.20; SC 250:266–68; *Faith Gives Fullness*, 275–76.

69. Bradshaw, *Aristotle East and West*, 170. In this sense the Cappadocians would not be that much different from Aquinas, the main opponent in Neopalamism.

corresponding to the divine essence, which is intrinsically active? In his study on the role of δύναμις (power) in the theology of Gregory of Nyssa, Michel Barnes reaches an interesting conclusion, "The issue of divine transcendence is expressed in terms of divine productivity," where "one of the ways in which Gregory uses power as a title of the divine nature (rather then as a title of the Son [as it is a case with Eunomius]) is in the phrase 'transcendent power,' δύναμις ὑπερκειμένη; indeed, I have found 'transcendent' is used more often of the δύναμις than of the φύσις or οὐσία."[70]

In the Cappadocian view it does not seem to be inconceivable for God's nature to be manifested through the divine power and activity (energy). The differentiation lies not in the essence/energy distinction, but in the difference between the manifestation of God and the apprehension of this manifestation by the human mind or soul. This approach allows for God's essence to some degree to be communicable while still remaining incomprehensible. As reserved as the Cappadocians are on the issue of divine *ousia*, the content of their trinitarian theology is directly concerned with this subject. It cannot be otherwise: the *absolute* unknowability of anything about God's essence would make the whole trinitarian theology impossible and irrelevant to soteriology.

Responding to Bradshaw's interpretation of Exod 33:18–23 in Gregory of Nazianzus,[71] where the distinction between God's essence and energies is presented as a distinction between God's "face" and God's "back parts," it seems to be legitimate to ask whether Gregory really implies this distinction there or simply refers to different, communicable and participable, aspects of divine nature. Is Gregory's emphasis in that oration on the discussion of the distinction between God as he is revealed to us, and the essence of God, that remains beyond our reach, or human ability to know God completely in his essence, that is aimed to refute the Neoarian claim of such knowledge? As is evident from the further content of this oration, the human ability for the complete understanding of God is Gregory's concern. For Gregory, human knowledge about God is limited not by the distinction between essence and energy, but by two other factors. One factor is expressly Christian and deals with the doctrine of creation. Another

70. Barnes, *Δύναμις in Gregory of Nyssa*, 223, for the fuller discussion of the issue see pp. 223–59.

71. See above, Bradshaw, *Aristotle East and West*, 168.

is Platonic—the imprisonment of the soul in a material body. The first is that it is quite impossible for any created nature to apprehend God completely; the second, it is even harder for a human nature covered by the thick materiality of the body.[72]

Another important aspect of this biblical passage is that Moses asks God to show him not the divine *ousia* specifically, but the divine glory. If, in the Palamite understanding, divine glory represents exclusively the expression of divine energy, this passage indicates that not only the divine essence, but also the divine energies, are incomprehensible and inaccessible. In this instance, any distinction between the two becomes irrelevant, which seems to be the case with the Cappadocians. For them, there is a great degree of incomprehensibility that is applicable to any essential and energetic manifestations of God.

Additionally, the importance of this biblical text is it demonstrates that if the inability of Moses to see the face of God indicates the inability to see and understand God as God-is-in-himself, and this inability is presented in the manifestation of divine glory and goodness that passed in front of Moses while his eyes were covered by the hand of God, it makes divine glory and goodness to be characteristics that intrinsically represent the divine *ousia* and not accessible to human vision in this life. The text might also be seen to indicate that such a vision of God's face/essence is possible in the afterlife, which subsequently would weaken the argument for ontological differentiation between the essence and energies within God.

The possibility of understanding God as God-is-in-himself in the afterlife is not discarded by the Cappadocians. Later in the same oration, where Gregory paralleled his experience with Moses's mystical encounter, he states, "What God is in nature and essence, no man ever yet has discovered or can discover." But, is it even possible to discover? Gregory leaves this question open and does not want to state the "teaching" of the church on this subject, but he does express his opinion: "In my opinion it will be discovered when that within us which is godlike and divine, I mean our mind and reason, shall have mingled with its Like, and the image shall have ascended to the Archetype, of which it has now the desire. And this I think is the solution of that vexed prob-

72. *Or*. 28.3–4.

lem as to 'We shall know even as we are known.'"[73] Gregory of Nyssa also confirms the human ability to comprehend the incomprehensible blissfulness and goodness of God's nature in the afterlife.[74] For Nyssa himself, this account of Moses with God signifies the propensity of the purified human soul for both never ceasing and never satisfied desire for ascending contemplation of the boundless and infinite Being of God. In his lengthy reflection on Moses's theophany Nyssa freely talks about God in terms of Being and points to Life and Goodness as substantial characteristics of divine nature. To see the "back parts" of God for Nyssa serves the analogy of continuous following God, where one who follows always sees the back of the one who is followed.[75]

In the Cappadocians the aspect of incomprehensibility is not limited only to the divine *ousia*, but also to the divine energy. It is beyond human ability to separate precisely who God is and what God does. Anything directly related to God, to use Nyssa's metaphor, is always covered by the divine cloud and darkness of apophaticism.[76] Also, if the distinction between essence and energies in God is strongly supported by the Cappadocians in the Palamite sense, Nazianzus never can imply the potential, almost identical reciprocity, for human beings to obtain such great knowledge of God in the afterlife.

Even referring to the potential human achievements in this life, Nazianzus, on several occasions, uses very audacious deificational statements that might imply a great sense of identification of the deified human being with God. In one place he says, "recognize that you have become a son of God, fellow heir with Christ, if I may be so bold, even

73. *Or*. 28.17; SC 250:134–36; NPNF 2 7:294. Cf. 1 Cor 13:12.

74. Gregory of Nyssa, *In Cant*. 11; GNO 6:336.

75. Gregory of Nyssa, *Vit. Mos*. 2.219–55. For other references to never ceasing and never satisfied desire for God in Nyssa see *In Cant*. 8, GNO 6:245; 12, GNO 6:366; 14, GNO 6:425; *Anim. et res*., PG 46:96–97.

76. Williams, with reference to Ivanka, comes to the similar conclusion, that as far as the epistemological aspect of human knowledge about God is concerned in the Capadocians, not only divine *ousia*, but also "God's *dynameis* or *energeiai* are themselves unknowable or incomprehensible" (Williams, "Philosophical Structures of Palamism," 43). Cf. Basil, *Eun*. 2.32 and Gregory of Nyssa, *De beatit*. 7.1; GNO 7/2:150. It is important to point out that in *Eun*. 2.32 Basil allows for at least theoretical possibility to make even identification between essence and energy. In *De beatit*. 7.1 Nyssa outlines the procession of divine activity: from nature proceeds power, from power proceeds energy; thus, if we would speak about ontological differentiation in God, distinction could be understood as tripartite, not merely between the *ousia* and *energeiai*.

very God [θεὸν αὐτόν]."[77] More frequently semi-identification statements appear in the christological and sacramental context:

> While His inferior Nature, the Humanity, became God, because it was united to God, and became One Person because the Higher Nature prevailed in order that I too might be made God so far as He is made Man [ἵνα γένωμαι τοσοῦτον θεός, ὅσον ἐκεῖνος ἄνθρωπος].[78]
>
> [Christ] impassible in His Godhead, passible in that which He assumed; as much Man for your sake as you are made god for his [τοσοῦτον ἄνθρωπον διά σε, ὅσον σὺ γίνῃ δι' ἐκεῖνον Θεός].[79]
>
> He assumes the poverty of my flesh, that I may assume the richness of His Godhead [πτωχεύει γὰρ τὴν ἐμὴν σάρκα, ἵν' ἐγὼ πλουτήσω τὴν αὐτοῦ θεότητα].[80]
>
> I must be buried with Christ, arise with Christ, be joint heir with Christ, become the son of God, yea, God Himself [θεὸν αὐτόν].[81]
>
> You are an image of God, but you also control this image, which is governed on this earth by divine dispensation and migrates to another life to which we shall all repair once we have played out our small role in this—what shall I call it? Prison-house? arena? phantom? figment?—of existence. Honor the nature you have in common [συμφυΐαν]; respect your archetype [ἀρχέτυπον]; ally yourself with God.[82]
>
> God will be "all in all" when we are no longer what we are now, a multiplicity of impulses and emotions, with little or nothing of God in us, but are fully like God [ὅλοι θεοειδεῖς], with room for God and God alone. This is "maturity" toward which we speed.[83]
>
> I will baptize you and make you a disciple in the Name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost; and These Three have One common name, the Godhead [θεότης]. And you shall

77. *Or*. 14.23; PG 35:888; FC 107:56.
78. *Or*. 29.19; SC 250:218; NPNF 2 7:308.
79. *Or*. 40.45; SC 358:306; NPNF 2 7:377. See also *Carm*. 1.1.11.7–10.
80. *Or*. 38.13; SC 358:134; NPNF 2 7:349.
81. *Or*. 7.23; SC 405:240; NPNF 2 7:237.
82. *Or*. 17.9; PG 35:976; FC 107:91.
83. *Or*. 30.6; SC 250:238; *Faith Gives Fullness*, 266.

> know, both by appearances and by words that you reject all ungodliness, and are united to all the Godhead [οὕτως ὅλῃ θεότητι συντασσόμενος]."[84]

> This is the meaning of our great mystery, this, our faith and rebirth in the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, and in our common name, our rejection of godlessness and our confession of Godhead [θεότητος]. This is the meaning of our common name. And so, to dishonor or separate any one of the three is to dishonor our confession of faith, that is, our rebirth, our Godhead [θεότητα], our deification [θέωσιν], our hope.[85]

Although these semi-identification theosis references in Gregory of Nazianzus do not imply the actual ontological identification of human beings with God in his understanding of deification, as I argued elsewhere,[86] neither do they imply or support the idea of ontological differentiation in the reality of God's essence and energies, which is of importance for us here. They also point to the real participation in the reality of God as God is.

As far as Bradshaw's reference to Gregory of Nyssa's treatment of the burning bush theophany of God to Moses is concerned,[87] the problem with Bradshaw's interpretation is that the allusion to the burning bush in Nyssa and in Eastern Orthodox tradition is the metaphor of Christ's incarnation by the Holy Spirit from the Virgin Mary. Even if we understand God's truth and light as divine energies, which became manifested to humanity through the incarnation of God's essence in the person of Christ, there is still a slight danger of interpreting the incarnation of Christ in the energetic, but not substantial sense. Overall for Nyssa, as he indicates later in the same treatise, the divine nature is capable of manifesting itself to a human being and always does it in the form that is accessible for human perception.[88]

The full divinity of Christ is resolutely affirmed by the Cappadocians, and the Holy Spirit deified Christ's humanity in the very moment of conception in the womb of Mary.[89] This relationship, or

84. *Or*. 40.45; SC 358:304; NPNF 2 7:376.

85. *Or*. 23.12; SC 270:304; FC 107:139–40.

86. Kharlamov, "Rhetorical Application," 115–31.

87. See above, Bradshaw, *Aristotle East and West*, 169.

88. Gregory of Nyssa, *Vit. Mos*. 2.119.

89. Gregory of Nazianzus, *Carm*. 2.2.7.190. See also *Or*. 38.13; *Ep*. 101.22.

comingling of divine and human natures in the person of Christ, is expressed on a significantly essential level, with a potential trajectory to human deification, as Gregory of Nazianzus rhetorically asks, "Shall not the Image be leavened and mingled with God, being deified by His Godhead [θεότητος]?"[90] For Gregory, even the body of Christ is God through deification.[91] Deification of a human being is the other side of the incarnation.[92] Through this union with humanity, Christ is "One God both defying and deified (θεῶσαν καὶ θεωθέν)."[93] For Gregory of Nyssa, Christ's incarnation as a kinship of divine and human natures is a necessary condition for divine filiation and participation into God, which restores human beings to divine inheritance, and gives them "a share in his own Godhead [θεότητος αὐτοῦ]."[94]

III

Our next question concerns what role *energeia*/*energeiai* plays in the Cappadocian trinitarian discourse. In the course of fourth century theology, we can notice a gradual shift in the application of the energy language. As Ayres observes, "Throughout the first sixty years of the fourth century we find a number of figures turning to the language of will or ἐνέργεια when they seek to explain the Son's generation without seeming to attribute passion and division to God."[95] This tendency can be traced in otherwise conflicting trinitarian theologies of the time.

Eunomius follows this trend. It is specifically important for his understanding of the generation of the Son.[96] He identifies God's will with his *energeia*, where the energy is correlated to the dignity of the substance, but is at the same time distinct from the substance. For Eunomius the essence and energy in God the Father are distinct realities. Thus, the *energeia* for Eunomius in relation to the Father and the

90. *Ep*. 101.46; PG 37:185; NPNF 2 7:441.

91. *Or*. 39.16.

92. See, for example, Basil, *Reg. fus*. 2.4; Gregory of Nazianzus, *Carm*. 1.1.11.10, PG 37:471; *Or*. 7.21, 23; 30.6, 14; Gregory of Nyssa, *Vit. Mos*. 2.35.

93. *Carm*. 1.1.10.61; PG 37:469. Cf. *Or*. 30.21.

94. *De perf*.; GNO 8/1:206.8–9; FC 58:117. Cf. *Antirrh*. 15, GNO 3/1:151.9–20; *Or. Cat*. 16.

95. Ayres, *Nicaea and Its Legacy*, 197.

96. Eunomius, *Apol*. 20–26. For the overview of Eunomian theology see, for example, Barnes, *Δύναμις in Gregory of Nyssa*, 173–219; Vaggione, *Eunomius of Cyzicus*.

Son has two major implications. First, the *energeia* of the Unbegotten Father produces, or begets, the Only-begotten Son. Eunomius understands the generation, or begetting, of the Son as the act of the Father's passionless will and unique energy. In this instance, the *energeia* of the Father cannot be shared with the Son. The name "Father" signifies the very *energeia* of begetting itself. As being separate from the *ousia* of God (the Father),[97] each *energeia* has a beginning and an end, otherwise the world would be coeval with God. Here Eunomius is careful not to fall in pantheism. Thus, the *energeia* for him is portrayed in terms of a cause-effect relationship. The Son is the effect of the Father's causality.

The second meaning of the *energeia* for Eunomius is in the similarity of *energeia* and *dynamis* between the Father and the Son, which again is closely, and in hierarchical-subordinate sense, connected to the divine causality but not to the Father's essence.[98] The Father and the Son share the single *energeia* only in the sense that after the begetting of the Son, the Father creates everything else through the Son. The activity of the Son is in participation and mediation of the creative activity of the Father. In this sense, the Father and the Son have likeness in energy but difference in essences, and for Eunomius there is no participation between essences.[99]

If, for Eunomius, a distinction between divine essence and activity justifies the difference in essence between the Son and the Father, but confirms their likeness in creative activity of the Father, Basil argues that identity in activity ought to presuppose identity in the essence. Basically, by accepting the Eunomian claim of *energetic* and *dynamic* likeness between the Father and the Son, Basil promptly refutes Eunomius on his own ground, reaffirming the Athanasian argument that what is identical

97. When Eunomius speaks about God in most cases he means God the Father. At some point he affirms God as the one and only Unbegotten (*Apol*. 28). However, in *Apol. Apol.* 3 Eunomius affirms that the Son *is* (truly exists) and he is the Lord, Creator, and God. Several times in *Exp. Fidei* Eunomius addresses the Son directly as God; however, he never addresses him as he does the Father, "the one and only true God" *Exp. Fidei* 1 (Eunomius, *Extant Works*, 150–51). For Eunomius, God the Father is God and Father of and for Christ.

98. For Eunomius, the understanding of the Son as the image of the Father is another evidence for the difference of their substances. In this sense, it is safe for him to say that the Son is the image of Father's power and action (*Apol*. 26).

99. Eunomius, *Exp. Fidei* 3.

in action has to be identical in essence.[100] Basil does not emphasize only the category of energy in this respect, but similarly employs this identity argumentation utilizing a whole chain of terms, including God's power and divine names. For example, in *Eun*. 1.18 Basil uses synonymously μορφή (citing Phil 2:6–7), εἰκών, and χᾰρακτήρ (citing Heb 1:3) in the discussion of full divinity of the Son and his identity with the Father in essence.[101] In another place Basil remarks, "The Only-begotten is an image of the unseen God, and an image, not of bodily appearance, but of the very Godhead [θεοτητός] and of the glories attributed to the substance of God [οὐσίᾳ τοῦ Θεοῦ]—an image of power, an image of wisdom."[102]

As far as energies in God are concerned, in a specifically trinitarian context, the Cappadocians often emphasize not energies, but one *energeia* in God, equally and identically manifested by all three Persons of the Trinity. All three—Father, Son, and Holy Spirit—do not differ in their *energeia*. This *homo*energism attests *homoousia*.[103] Thus, this identity argumentation makes the presence of ontological differentiation in the innermost reality of God between the essence and its manifestations very unlikely. In the argument from identity of activity to the identity of the substance, devising the distinction between divine essence and energy could only confirm the Eunomian position on the difference of the Father from the Son in the substance, but likeness in the action—the position that is justified by this distinction.

However, there is another implication of the Neoarian theology where this distinction can actually be useful. Aetius and Eunomius believed in the possibility of knowing the οὐσία of God. Epiphanius witnesses that Aetius was saying that he knows God with perfect clarity, and knows and understands him to such an extent that he does not understand himself better than he knows God.[104] Eunomius goes even

100. This argument constitutes the main core of Basil's *Adversus Eunomium*.

101. SC 299:236–38.

102. *Ep*. 236.1; Basil, *Letters* vol. 3, LCL 243:389. Cf. 1 Cor 1:23–24. Apparently, a human being in the image of God has a different connotation attached to the image than the Son as the image of the Father, see *Eun*. 2.17; SC 305:66.

103. In this instance the Cappadocians would not be different from Athanasius and subsequently would be followed by Cyril of Alexandria, cf. Prestige, *God in Patristic Thought*, 257–64.

104. *Haer.* 76.4.

further. In a fragment that has came down to us in Socrates, Eunomius says, "God does not know anything more about his own essence than we do, nor is that essence better known to him and less to us; rather, whatever we ourselves know about it is exactly what he knows, and, conversely, that which he knows is what you will find without change in us."[105]

For Neoarians to say that God's essence is incomprehensible would imply that God is irrational. The intrinsic characteristic that predicates God's essence for Neoarians is unbegottenness or ingeneratedness. For Aetius and Eunomius, the Ingenerate Deity transcends any cause, and therefore does not derive its essence from anything else. As Aetius says, "If the ingenerate essence is superior to origination, owing its superiority in itself, it is *per se* ingenerate essence. For it is not superior to origination because it wills to be, but because it is naturally so."[106] Therefore, it follows that the Son, who was begotten by the Father, cannot be identical with the Unbegotten, because his essence in regard to begetting has origination. If one ascribes the two properties, "unbegotten" and "begotten," to the same essence, this individual will fall into great inconsistency, because these predicates are mutually exclusive and could not be attributed to the same essence.[107] In Eunomius's analysis of the essences as they are revealed in divine names, accordingly ἀγέννητος and γέννημα, we come to an understanding of the things they signify.[108]

In this instance, the distinction between God's essence and energies might be effective in order to refute Eunomius's claim that anything predicated of God's simplicity has to be a predicate of his essence. Thus, the distinction between God's essence and energies in principle might receive double, but paradoxical, complexity. As we can see, both the importance of devising this distinction in God, and denying it, have significance for the repudiation of Eunomius. However, even in this context, Basil, in *Adversus Eunomium*, does not build his argument utilizing the idea of this distinction at all. He simply ridicules Eunomius for arbitrarily selecting unbegottenness as the single predicate of distinctly divine essence, and emphasizes the essential incomprehensibility of God,

105. *Fr.* 2; Eunomius, *Extant Works*, 179; in Socrates, *HE* 4.7.

106. Aetius, *Synt.* 18; Wickham, "*Syntagmation*," 542, 547. Cf. Eunomius, *Apol.* 7–9.

107. Aetius, *Synt.* 8, 10.

108. Eunomius, *Apol.* 9.

where the idea of this incomprehensibility might also prevent him from affirming anything strictly related to the interiority of God. Perhaps, the "fault" of Palamas and the whole complexity that follows, might be in an attempt to express more clearly the nature of the ontological reality in the transcendent God, the matter that is beyond human comprehension. The Cappadocians are careful not to fall into this trap. The distinction we find in the Cappadocians is not between the substance and energies in God, but between the hypostases of the Trinity.

IV

How important is the term ἐνέργεια for the Cappadocians in general? Do they really assign the specific and complex theological significance to it that it is going to play in Gregory Palamas and Neopalamism? "Uncreated divine energies" for Palamas are only communicable and participable aspects of God, distinct from and subsequent to God's essence. Energies, Lossky asserts, "are external to the very being of the Trinity."[109] At the same time, as Bradshaw effectively pointed out, *energeiai* must be more than merely divine activity *ad extra* in order to constitute and justify, or in the case of the Cappadocians to lead the way to, the Palamite ontological differentiation in God. To some extent, energies are also the intrinsic qualifiers to the innermost reality of God: "God Himself under some nameable aspect or form."[110] Thus, a long list of theological terms and ideas is outlined under the Palamite understanding of energies: the Taboric light of the hesychastic mystical encounter, deifying grace, the theophanies of the Old Testament, the visible character of the divinity, God's will, attributes or attributes in motion (including holiness, immortality, incorruptibility, eternity, infinity, freedom, wisdom, goodness, love, life and so on), perfections, powers (*dynameis*), *logoi*, divine names.[111] As Finch observes: "Thus, whereas *energeia* is most literally rendered 'action' or 'operation,' the term came to signify within the Palamite tradition everything which God revealed of Himself in the economy of salvation—His attributes or

109. Lossky, *Mystical Theology*, 81.

110. Bradshaw, *Aristotle East and West*, 165.

111. Lossky, *Mystical Theology*, 67–90; Lossky, *In Image and Likeness*, 52–64; Staniloae, *Revelation and Knowledge*, 125–34; Bradshaw, *Aristotle East and West*, 238–42, etc. See also Finch, "Sanctity as Participation," 14–25.

predicates and His will or thoughts—as well as the sequential, temporal acts whereby He and they are revealed, consummately in the divine light of Christ's transfiguration."[112]

Uncreated energies in Palamism accumulatively define a sort of communicable aspect of divine nature that is distinct from divine essence, which in itself constitutes a very complicated attempt to explain human ability to partake in divine nature while keeping this nature inaccessible.

Energeia and its derivatives are very common vocabulary for the Cappadocian fathers. In Basil's undisputed works alone, there are about three hundred occurrences. Basil uses ἐνέργεια to mean action, activity, operation, function, work, and, more rarely, actuality. *Energeia* is indiscriminately employed when Basil talks about God, Hypostases of the Trinity, human beings, and other creatures. Thus, *energeia* characterizes all sorts of activities and their results. *Energeia*, along with *dynamis* and *idiotês*, also points to the concrete existence of any *ousia*, where any essence taken by itself would be meaningless, or inconceivable, without *energeiai*.

There is no evidence to suggest that, apart from general use, Basil assigns any particular theological significance to *energeia* in the same way he does in *Ep*. 234.1. In this instance, it is not surprising that in patristic tradition preceding Basil, we cannot trace the distinction between *ousia* and *energeia* in the reality of God. Both terms are occasionally articulated in close inseparable connection. In some occasions, *energeia* is the expressible indicator of not only essential activity, but of what can be seen as God's essence itself. At least on some occasions, both terms are applied in an undifferentiated way. Atheganoras identifies the Logos with divine energy, while affirming the oneness of the Father with the Son. The Son is not only the Logos "of the Father, in idea [ἰδέᾳ] and function [ἐνεργείᾳ]," but also "the Son is in the Father and the Father in the Son by a powerful unity of spirit [ἑνότητι καὶ δυνάμει πνεύματος], the Son of God is the mind [νοῦς] and reason [λόγος] of the Father."[113] For Clement of Alexandria, the Son is also "paternal energy" and "paternal power."[114] Athanasius goes a little further in what

112. Finch, "Sanctity as Participation," 24–25.

113. Athenagoras, *Leg*. 10.2; Athenagoras, *Legatio*, 20–22 (slightly altered).

114. *Strom*. 7.2; GCS 17: Clemens 3:7–8; ANF 2:525. Even though Henny Hägg proposes to incorporate Clement into Palamate essence/energy patristic ancestry on the

can be seen as an anti-Palamite direction. Once he calls the Logos "essential energy (ἐνούσιος ἐνέργεια)" of the Father.[115] For Athanasius, through Christ, "the deifying and enlightening power of the Father," which is coessential (*homoosius*) with the Godhead, "we partake the Father." In the same passage, Athanasius refers to Christ as the Father's "essential Godhead and Image [αὐτοῦ οὐσιώδης θεότης καὶ εἰκὼν τοῦ πατρός]."[116] Even stronger evidence for the absence of this distinction is stated when Athanasius says, "The Word became flesh, that he might make man capable of Godhead (θεότητος)."[117] One of the Athanasian, as well as Cappadocian, terms for participation is μετουσία (*meta* + *ousia*), which as well might be undermining the Palamite distinction.[118]

When Basil states in *Ep*. 234.1, "From His [God's] activities [ἐνεργειῶν] we know our God, but His substance [οὐσίᾳ] itself we do not profess to approach,"[119] he certainly deserves the credit for being the first patristic author who sketched this distinction. From the opening lines of this letter, it is likewise possible to discern that the significance of this distinction for Basil is predominantly epistemological, and "knowing" for him "has many meanings."[120] To read into Basil the Palamite distinction might be premature. Alexis Torrance observes, "a superficial terminological similarity need not imply conceptual kinship, especially when such a large intervening time-period is in question."[121] As Torrance additionally points out that Palamas, who cites *Ep*. 234.1 on several occasions, does not generally "take it as a straightforward exposition of his views. A simple testimony to this is the absence of any explicit reference

common ground of his and Cappadocian apophaticism, her attempt presents rather a sketchy suggestion (Hägg, *Clement of Alexandria*, 264–68). For one thing, she takes for granted the view that the Cappadocians affirmatively expressed their support for the essence/energy distinction in God. For another, as she admits herself, Clement's understanding of unknowability of God extends predominantly in his perception of God the Father. It is a distinction of the unknowable Father and knowable Son, as she deduces, "the opposition between the knowability of the Son and the unknowability of the Father always remains [in Clement]" (ibid., 262).

115. *Ar*. 2.2; PG 26:152.

116. *De Syn*. 51; PG 26:784; NPNF 2 4:477. Cf. *Ar*. 3.14.

117. *Ar*. 2.59; PG 26:273; NPNF 2 4:380; see also *Vit. Anton*. 74; *Ep. Epict*. 6.

118. Finch, "Sanctity as Participation," 66.

119. *Ep*. 234.1; Basil, *Letters* vol. 3, LCL 243:372–73.

120. *Ep*. 234.1; Basil, *Letters* vol. 3, LCL 243:370–71. Cf. *Ep*. 235.2–3.

121. Torrance, "Precedents for Palamas," 55 n. 21.

to the passage in either *Triads* or *The One Hundred and Fifty Chapters*, generally regarded as Gregory's most important theological works."[122] In this letter, Basil does not really state the *absolute* incomprehensibility of God, he simply points to the apophatic nature of human knowledge about the essence of God, "His [God's] divine substance . . . is the perception of His incomprehensibility."[123] "For he who says that he does not know the substance has not confessed that he does not know God."[124]

Basil is very careful to show the relative and limited ability of human language to express the reality of God. The same words can be used in different situations describing different realities, as well as antonyms that can be descriptive of the same reality: the awfulness and benevolence of God is his example. The danger of Neoarianism for Basil specifically is in the theory of that theological trend to assign to certain terms the claim that they exhaustively express the full meaning of reality they were selected to define. It is what he calls "a sophism that involves countless absurdities."[125] For Basil, there is no one universal term that can fully define God's essence. Therefore, what we can see in Basil is not the distinction within God between his essence and energies, but the distinction between knowable and unknowable aspects of divine reality. What is knowable about God (and Basil lists a number of divine attributes as an example) is what we can confess, and that constitutes our knowledge in worship, but the rest is left in the venerated silence of incomprehensibility. As far as the knowledge is concerned, Basil continues in the following letter,

122. Ibid., 55 n. 20. Torrance's own suggestion for possible precedent of the Palamite essence/energy distinction in the Cappadocians such as proposed identification of power (δύναμις) with energy (ἐνέργεια) in Gregory of Nazianzus does not take into serious consideration the Cappadocian polemic with Eunomius who favors this identification as well as Eunomian support for the separation of energies from divine substance (see Barnes, *Δύναμις in Gregory of Nyssa*, 189–91). More commonly, even though by no means consistently, the Cappadocians use δύναμις as a median term between essence and energy. The identification of δύναμις with ἐνέργεια can present only terminological similarity that does not imply conceptual kinship that she criticizes here. Her analysis, which I found very helpful, of co-dwelling (οἰκείωσις) in Basil and relation (σχέσις) in Gregory of Nazianzus can serve as examples of anti-precedents for Palamite essence/energy distinction more then possible precedents.

123. *Ep*. 234.2; Basil, *Letters* vol. 3, LCL 243:374–75.

124. *Ep*. 234.1; Basil, *Letters* vol. 3, LCL 243:372–73.

125. *Ep*. 234.1; Basil, *Letters* vol. 3, LCL 243:372–73.

> The word "knowledge" has a wide sweep, and a thing is knowable with respect to number, and size, and power, and manner of subsistence, and time of generation, and substance, these men, taking the universal meaning of knowledge in their questioning, if they find us confessing that we know, demand of us knowledge of the substance or existence; and if they see that we are cautious about making our answer, they turn upon us the reproach of impiety. But our position is that we confess that we know what is knowable about God, and yet to "know" anything, on the other hand that escapes our comprehension is impossible.[126]

There is a limit to human knowledge. A finite created being never can fully apprehend the infinite reality of God, and therefore theological language ought to be careful and reserved. However, what can be comprehended, and Basil says that we understand God from his energies, attributes, power and most of all through what is revealed by Christ, is a knowledgeable aspect of Christian faith and worship. What is revealed in Christ does not necessarily exclude the revelation of the Father's essence, Basil only asks, if what is revealed by Christ is the Father's essence, then "tell where He has told of the unbegotten character of His substance?"[127] Again the main argument in Basil boils down to the Neoarian identification of God's essence exclusively with unbegotteness. For Basil, human language about God is not definitive, but rather descriptive, and it does not allow for precise terminological identification of the essential reality of God.[128] The sense of incomprehensibility of God's substance for Basil includes at least a couple of affirmative elements. First, Basil acknowledges that God, indeed, has an essence; secondly, God as substantive reality exists and manifests himself.

The essence of God is not the only thing that is both, to some degree, recognizable, therefore communicable, and at the same time, incomprehensible. There are many other, even mundane, things that are both knowable and unknowable at the same time. Basil uses vivid examples to demonstrate this point. If a person is asked whether he/she knows the sand, most people would respond, "Yes." But if they are asked, whether they know how many grains of sand there are, no one would be

126. *Ep*. 235.2; Basil, *Letters* vol. 3, LCL 243:379–81.

127. *Ep*. 234.3; Basil, *Letters* vol. 3, LCL 243:374–75.

128. See Basil, *Eun*. 1.5–14.

able to answer. If a person is asked, does he/she know such and such a person, they can say, "Yes." But if asked, since they know this person, do they know his/her character or the inner most part of that person's soul, obviously, very few would respond to this question positively. As Basil continues, "I both know and am ignorant even of myself. For I know myself, who I am, but I do not know myself, insofar as I am ignorant of my substance."[129] What about domestic animals? Do they know their owners? Yes, but do they know the substance of their owners?[130]

As we can see, for Basil not only the essence of God is beyond human comprehension, but even substances of created things are hard to grasp. There is some indication in Basil that the essence of anything is unknowable. However, any understanding of essential reality of beings can only be achieved through the qualities (ποιότητος) manifested by those entities. In *Hex*. 1.8, Basil argues that it is impossible to strip off any particular existing entity from its qualities and characteristics that this entity manifests in order to discern its essence. If anyone attempts to do so, it would lead to total deconstruction and obliteration, at least in a cognitive perspective, of any essential reality that this particular entity possesses, "Try to take away by reason each of the qualities it possesses, and you end up with nothing."[131] Thus, by separating qualities, we can add energies and attributes, from the essence any knowledge about any particular thing becomes impossible. Basil is not a friend of David Hume and is not a present day postmodernist. For him, what does not exist as an essence does not exist at all. Any attribute discernable to human reason that describes the existing particular reality to some degree constitutes or points to an essential aspects of its substance. Similarly for Gregory of Nyssa, "Every subject has certain inherent characteristics, by means of which the specialty of that underlying nature is known."[132] In another place Nyssa writers, "It is entirely necessary that in the inquiry about the divine nature we be guided by its activity."[133] Translating this way of reasoning into a human understanding of God, it indicates that through knowledge of divine energies, powers, and at-

129. *Ep*. 235.2; Basil, *Letters* vol. 3, LCL 243:380–81.

130. *Ep*. 235.3; Basil, *Letters* vol. 3, LCL 243:383. Cf. Isa 1:3.

131. *Hex*. 1.8; SC 26:120; NPNF 2 8:56.

132. *Cont. Eunom*. 1; GNO 1:174; NPNF 2 5:82. Cf.

133. (Pseudo)-Basil, *Ep*. 189.6, Basil, *Letters* vol. 3, LCL 243:62–63. This letter is ascribed to Gregory of Nyssa.

tributes, the human mind can arrive at some understanding of divine nature, of course, to the degree those energies, powers, and attributes are revealed, and to the capacity of the human mind itself. "The judgment of the mind has been given us," Basil says, "for the apprehension of the truth. And our God is truth itself. Therefore it is the first concern of the mind to recognize our God, but to recognize Him in such a way as the infinitely great can be known by the very small."[134] This knowledge is not sufficient to make a precise definition of the essence, but it is not essentialist agnosticism either. Basil defines God's essence by means of partial characterizations, which allows for conceiving some idea of what God is while still professing divine incomprehensibility.[135] Besides, as Torrance correctly points out, the knowledge that comes from divine energies (presented by Basil in his letters to Amphilochius as God's workings in the world), first, is not the only divine knowledge available to humans; second, it is not the climactic point of Basil's gnosiological scheme. There is also the knowledge that comes from keeping God's commandments and culmination of all knowledge is in intimate reciprocal relationship with God—οἰκείωσις.[136] Knowledge of God for Basil is the act of faith.[137] Gregory of Nyssa in unison with Basil's faith-based gnosiology remarks, "It is impossible to draw near God unless faith mediates and by itself brings the seeking mind into union with the incomprehensible nature."[138]

Basil's gnosiology is a multidimensional epistemology of faith, worship, and fellowship with God. However, what is most important here is that on an ontological level there cannot be a distinction between the essence and its qualities, even though human knowledge about qualities still can render understanding of the essence incomprehensible. For Basil the divine energy as God's activity in the world is closely connected with the God's power as intrinsic productive capacity. Together energy and power are immanently linked to both the identity (essence) of God and manifestation of his existence. If this is not the case, it would make impossible for the Cappadocians to argue from the

134. *Ep*. 233.2; Basil, *Letters* vol. 3, LCL 243:368–69.

135. See, for example, *Hom. div*. 15.1.

136. *Ep*. 235.3.

137. Torrance, "Precedents for Palamas," 53–56.

138. Gregory of Nyssa, *Cont. Eunom*. 2.91; GNO 1:253.

identity of δύναμις and ἐνέργεια in all three Persons of the Trinity to the consubstantiality of their essence, and at the same time acknowledging hypostatic distinctions. If any characteristic of divine nature is totally beyond human comprehension, relaying only on economic trinitarian manifestations would logically lead to postulation of tritheism (regardless of whether it would it be expressed in ways similar to Arian subordinate perspective or not) rather then of monotheism. The Cappadocians, specifically, saw this as the danger to Christian religion that was coming from Arianism.

V

The final issue, which I will address in this essay, examines how important is the notion of participation for the Cappadocians in the context of divine essential incomprehensibility and human deification. The understanding of participation in God penetrates Cappadocian theology on several levels. First, already in anthropology, from the beginning the human soul received a personal touch of God. Human spirit, Nazianzus says, is "piece broken off [or impetus of] the invisible Godhead (θεότητος ἀειδέος)."[139] For Gregory of Nyssa, human beings also were created in *dei*form character (θεοειδής χαρακτήρ)[140]—the image of God. They received the imprint of God's own nature, as Nyssa says, "The measure of what is accessible to you is in you, for thus your Maker from the start invested your essential nature with such good. God has imprinted upon your constitution replicas of the good things in his own nature [τῶν γὰρ τῆς ἰδίας φύσεως ἀγαθῶν ὁ Θεὸς ἐνετύπωσε τῇ σῇ κατασκευῇ τὰ μιμήματα], as though stamping wax with the shape of design."[141] The image of God in a human being is decorated by "the proper adornment of God's own nature [τὸν ἴδιον αὐτοῦ τῆς φύσεως κόσμον ἐπιβαλὼν τῇ εἰκόνι]."[142] In the context of discussing the Logos of God, or God the Logos (θεοῦ λόγος/θεὸς λόγος), as the creative power of God that exists substantially and essentially (οὐσίαν τις ὑφεστῶσα δύναμις), Nyssa indicates such essential qualities of divine nature (τὴν θείαν καθορᾶται φύσιν) as light, glory, and goodness. For Nyssa, they are not only com-

139. *Carm*. 1.1.8.73; PG 37:452.

140. *De beatit*. 6.4; GNO 7/2:143.

141. Ibid.; *Homilies on the Beatitudes*, 70.

142. *De opif*. 9.1; PG 44:149; NPNF 2 5:395.

municable and revealed, but also participable and innately mingled with human nature.[143] In the constitution of human nature, as it was created by God, there is some form of akin likeness between God and a human being that enables humanity to participate and correspond with God, "in this likeness, implied in the word image,[144] there is a summary of all things that characterize Deity [ἐν γὰρ τῇ ὁμοιώσει τῇ κατὰ τὴν εἰκόνα πάντων ἐστὶ τῶν τὸ θεῖον χαρακτηριζόντων ἡ ἀπαρίθμησις]."[145] The additional significance of this passage is that Nyssa views light, glory, goodness, and eternal existence as essential qualities of divine nature, but not merely as divine energies. The ontological and epistemological aspects of God's incomprehensibility come together in the mystery of the human being itself. Even though, for Nyssa, as for Basil, not only the nature of God is beyond comprehension, human nature is incomprehensible as well, the human mind, properly reflecting in itself the image of God, has a resemblance to the Archetype, "For if, while the archetype [πρωτότυπον] transcends comprehension, the nature of the image were comprehended, the contrary character of the attributes we behold in them would prove the defect of the image; but since the nature of our mind, which is the likeness of the Creator evades our knowledge, it has an accurate resemblance to the superior nature, figuring by its own unknowableness the incomprehensible Nature."[146]

Discussing the role of hope, faith, and love in the process of ascending contemplation, Gregory of Nyssa comes to the description of the deified state of the soul. The human soul in the state of *apatheia* "becomes godlike [θεοειδὴς γίνεται]" and "it imitates the life beyond, being informed by the characteristics of the divine nature [οὕτω τὴν ὑπερέχουσαν μιμεῖται ζωὴν τοῖς ἰδιώμασι τῆς θείας φύσεως ἐμμορφωθεῖσα], so that none of the other things is left in it except the disposition to love and to attach itself naturally to the beautiful. For this is what love is." In this process the soul not only imitates but also resembles, if not fully identifies itself with, divine-like characteristics:

> When the soul, having become simple and uncomplex and entirely god-like, discovers the good that is truly simple and in-

143. *Or. Cat.* 5.

144. Gen 1:27.

145. *Or. Cat.* 5; PG 45:21–24; NPNF 2 5:479.

146. *De opif.* 11.4; PG 44:156; NPNF 2 5:396–97.

> corporeal, the only thing in existence which is absolutely delectable and loveable, it clings to it and mingles [συνανακιρνᾶται] itself with it through its affectionate movement and activity. It conforms itself to that which is always comprehended and discovered and, once it has become, through its similarity to the good, identical with the nature of what it participates in [πρὸς τὸ ἀεὶ καταλαμβανόμενόν τε καὶ εὑρισκόμενον ἑαυτὴν μορφοῦσα· καὶ τοῦτο γινομένη διὰ τῆς τοῦ ἀγαθοῦ ὁμοιότητος, ὅπερή τοῦ μετεχομένου φύσις ἐστίν], desire is no longer present in it because there is no need of any of the goods. Consequently, the soul in this state of abundance expels from itself the desiring motion and disposition which existed only when what was desired was not present.[147]

Thus, in *apatheia*, the soul obtains a very god-like deified state characterized by simplicity, beauty, incorporeality, and motionlessness. If the *dei*-formative "characteristics of the divine nature" are interpreted as reference to divine energies, then the state of being "identical with the nature of what it participates in" would imply the existence of a certain "nature" that is characteristic of the energies. Thus, in addition to the divine nature, we end up with a "nature" of energies, basically with energies as separated ontological entities that have their own essences. Even though, if the "nature" of energies is a derivative of the nature of God, this interpretation will be reminiscent of semi-emanationist Eunomius's idea of energies as caused separate ontological realities that accompany its causal *ousia*; the theory that Gregory of Nyssa refutes in *Contra Eunomium*.[148]

As Gregory continues, it becomes clear that the motivation, driving force, and fulfillment behind this process is love, and for Gregory love is understood both as the characteristic of divine nature and divine activity, as well as the driving force within and without God, "The divine life, which is beautiful by nature and has from its nature a love, which is beautiful, will always be activated by love."[149] The beauty of divine life and nature is love, and love is both who God is, and what God does. For Nyssa, there is essential unity between divine substance

147. *Anim. et res*.; PG 46:93–96; FC 58:239.

148. *Cont. Eunom*. 1.205–11. This passage also is referred to as indication that Nyssa explicitly rejects a distinction between the subject and the operation in God. See Balás, *Μετουσια Θεου*, 128.

149. Gregory of Nyssa, *Anim. et res*.; PG 46:96–97; FC 58:240.

and activity where love, to name just one, is the characteristic of both.[150] These essential and energetic characteristics of divine nature and life are reflected in the human soul created in the image of God. Looking within itself the soul can see the archetype as looking at the mirror. The reality of this reflection, ontologically grounded in human nature, enables and motivates human participation in God, and at the same time the human soul strives for the full implication of similar characteristics that it sees in its own reflection. The divine-like qualities of the image of God allow persons to participate in God without violating ontological boundaries between uncreated God and created human beings. In typically antinomical style Gregory states, "It is truly possible to say that in our soul's imitation of the nature above it, there is complete assimilation to the divine." And in the next sentence, "The nature beyond thought, far removed from what is seen in us, leads its own life in some other manner and not as we do in our present life."[151] Gregory, perhaps, is not precise in his formulations, but his ambiguity often is purposeful. It, in a paradoxical way, supports God's transcendence and incomprehensibility, without depriving human beings from participation in God (nature included), and assimilation to a god-like state.

It is important to point out that if we search for the evidence of the essence/energies distinction in Nyssa, we encounter an apparent incongruity in *De beatit*. 6. In *De beatit*. 6.3 Gregory remarks, "He [God] who is by nature invisible becomes visible in his operations [ἐνεργείαις], being seen in certain cases by the properties." However, what follows in *De beatit*. 6.4 indicates that even educated non-Christians can "draw an analogy from an operation to the operator." Christians, though, can arrive at an even deeper meaning in this Beatitude, that has deificational participatory significance, "the Lord does not say that knowing something about God is blessed, but to possess God in oneself . . . The person who has purged his own heart of every tendency to passion perceives in his own beauty the reflection of divine nature."[152] Perhaps, contrary

150. In this instance we hardly can associate Nyssa with Lossky's Neopalamite understanding of divine energies: "When we say that God is Wisdom, Life, Truth, Love—we understand the energies, which are subsequent to the essence and are not its natural manifestations, but are external to the very being of the Trinity." *Mystical Theology*, 80–81.

151. Gregory of Nyssa, *Anim. et res.*; PG 46:92; FC 58:238.

152. *De beatit*. 6.3–4; GNO 7/2:140–42; *Homilies on the Beatitudes*, 69–70.

to what is argued by Bradshaw, who also studied this passage,[153] Nyssa is not particularly concerned with the specificities of the distinction between divine essence and energy, which Bradshaw thinks is implied here. For Gregory, divine nature is incomprehensible, but not imparticiable, and participation in God has precedence for him. As Gregory in another place remarks,

> to participate in the Beatitudes is nothing less than sharing in deity [θεότητος κοινωνία], toward which the Lord leads us up by his words. He [God] seems to me therefore to be in a way deifying [θεοποιεῖν] the one who hears and attends to his word through the teaching of the Beatitude . . . If the title "Pitiful" is one befitting God, what else is the Word doing than summoning you to become a god [θεόν . . . γενέσθαι], inasmuch as you were shaped with the features of deity [θεότητος ἰδιώματι]? . . . [H]uman . . . is deemed worthy of divine blessedness, endowed with the quality which is attributed to the Divine.[154]

And if one asks Nyssa for the definition of Christianity he would reply, "Christianity is an imitation of the divine nature [ὅτι χριστιανισμός ἐστι τῆς θείας φύσεως μίμησις]."[155] For Gregory, Christ leads us

> to Heaven itself, which He has rendered accessible to men by virtue. Secondly, He gives them not only the vision of, but a share in, the Divine power, bringing them as it were to kinship with the Divine Nature [εἰς συγγένειαν τρόπον τινὰ τῆς ὑπερκειμένης φύσεως]. Moreover, He does not hide the supernal glory [ὑπερέχουσαν δόξαν] in darkness, making it difficult for those who want to contemplate it; but He first illumines the darkness by the brilliant light of His teaching and then grants the pure of heart the vision of the ineffable glory in shining splendour.[156]

And, as Nyssa continues in the fifth oration,

> Such a man is almost no longer shown in terms of human nature, but, through virtue, is likened to God Himself, so that he seems to be another god, in that he does those things that God alone can do. For the forgiving of debts is the special preroga-

153. See Bradshaw, *Aristotle East and West*, 174–76.

154. *De beatit*. 5.1–2; GNO 7/2:124–25; *Homilies on the Beatitudes*, 57–58.

155. *De prof. Chr*.; GNO 8/1:136; FC 58:85.

156. *Or. Dom*. 2; GNO 7/2:20–21; ACW 18:35–36.

> tive of God. . . . If therefore a man imitates in his own life the characteristics of the Divine nature [ἐν τῷ ἰδίῳ βίῳ μιμήσαιτο τῆς θείας φύσεωςτὰ γνωρίσματα], he becomes somehow that which he visibly imitates . . . If a man is free from everything that comes under the idea of evil he becomes, so to speak, a god by his very way of life, since he verifies in himself what reason finds in the Divine Nature [ἐκεῖνο κατορθώσας ἑαυτῷ ὃ περὶ τὴν θείαν φύσιν ὁ λόγος βλέπει]. Do you realize to what height the Lord raises His hearers through the words of the prayer, by which He somehow transforms human nature into what is Divine? For he lays down that those who approach God should themselves become gods.[157]

The doctrine of creation *ex nihilo*, with the increased emphasis on the transcendence of God, might be seen as presenting a problem in understanding the human ability to participate, or share in, divine life and being deified. However, often this tension might be seen as exaggerated in light of later post-Dionysian and Palamite developments of Byzantine theology. In Athanasius and the Cappadocians, human deification is attributed to the grace of adoption, and thus the ontological unbridgeable disparity between the Creator and the creature is secured. The Cappadocians, additionally, in this regard, apply the Platonic disclaimer, introduced by Clement of Alexandria and Origen, that we participate in God "as far as possible (κατὰ τὸ δυνατόν)" for our nature.[158] Apophatism in the Cappadocian theology is not that of, strictly speaking, Neoplatonism. The absolute singularity of divine nature is not the inaccessible, simple, passive One of Plotinus, or for that matter also of Eunomius, but rather this divine simplicity is the divine life itself, with its manifestations in the world. There is a fundamental ontological distinction between the Creator and creation; however, the apophatic aspect of this distinction is intimately connected with God's active involvement in the life of his creation, and human involvement in the life of God. Nevertheless, our participation in the nature of God does not necessarily make this nature knowable. Divine nature is both incomprehensible and communicable. Gregory of Nazianzus, after describing the unique character of divine nature, notes that some people "come close

157. *Or. Dom*. 5; GNO 7/2:59–60; ACW 18:71–72.

158. Plato, *Theaet*. 176bc; Basil of Caesarea, *Ep*. 233.1; Gregory of Nyssa, *De perf*., GNO 8/1:206.4–14, etc.

to it [divine nature] with varying success and will continue to do so, and this not by nature, but as a result of participation, and precisely when, by serving the Trinity properly, they rise above servitude."[159] God and his divine act in the world are beyond human comprehension, and at the same time, human participation in the life of God is real.

There is a fundamental ontological distinction between God and creation, but there is no dualism between them. Athanasius, for example, would understand creation as theophany. Therefore, there is nothing to prevent him from affirming the possibility of human likeness to God "according to essence (κατ᾽ οὐσίαν)."[160] Similarly to Athanasius, the Cappadocians believe in the creation *ex nihilo*. Everything that exists was substantiated or came into being because of God.[161] In this one tenet, Gregory of Nyssa simultaneously and paradoxically introduces both an important ontological distinction, and a connection, between the created and the uncreated. As a distinction, it is so great, that it leads Andrew Louth to conclude, "that there is no possibility of the soul passing across it: there is no ecstasy, in which the soul leaves its nature as created and passes into uncreated."[162] As far as an ontological connection is concerned, in the cosmic order, humans do not have anything that ontologically is totally without some form of participation into the divine, because God is the source of existence for everything that exists. God is the primary Being, who exists in a proper sense, the rest that exists, exists only in relation to God.[163] Therefore, in Gregory of Nyssa and in the Cappadocians in general, there is a preference to the role of the image of God in human beings over the role of human language in communication of divine knowledge. Human language always has problematic ambiguity where each word has an implicit reference to its opposite ("white"—"black, "hot"—"cold"). Language also presents a contrast between more certainty of sense knowledge with less certainty of abstract knowledge. In this regard language is very limited in properly communicating the reality of God, which is free of any opposition

159. *Or*. 23.11; SC 270:304; FC 107:139. Cf. Gregory of Nyssa, *Vit. Mos*. 1.7.

160. *De Syn*. 53; PG 26:788; NPNF 2 4:479.

161. See, for example, Gregory of Nyssa, *De inf*., GNO 3/2:76.25—77.2. Cf. *Cont. Eunom*. 4.2.

162. Louth, *Origins of Christian Mystical Tradition*, 81.

163. *In Eccl*. 7: GNO 5:406. Cf. *Or. Cat*. 32; *In Ps*.1.8, GNO 5:62.26—63.6; *Vit. Mos*. 2.24–25.

and is not directly a subject to the sense experience. While in the image of God in human beings there is more directly correlated communication between human individuals and their Creator.

Another aspect of the communicability between God, transcendent and incomprehensible in his nature, and humankind, lies not in the ontological differentiation between divine essence and energies, but in the reality of the incarnation of the Logos, where the two natures are simultaneously present in the person of Christ. Divine nature essentially is transcendent, and is not accessible apart from Christ, who revealed God in his humanity. In assuming human nature Christ also gave humans the potential to participate in his divinity. This is why human beings can only participate in God the Father through the incarnated Logos. Even the Holy Spirit (the full divinity of whom is firmly established by the Cappadocians) works through Christ. The incarnation does not terminate the ontological distinction between uncreated and created and incomprehensible character of divine nature, but makes it accessible. A deified human achieves a certain likeness to God, where the language of participation, to refer to Finch's remarks in the context of Athanasius, mediates between connaturality or consubstantiality of the essential-immutable reality of God, and the gratuitous-mutable reality of human beings.[164]

The incarnation of Christ is an inexplicable mystery of the divine-human union, which, along with an innate human propensity toward God, introduces the possibility for direct and transforming participation into the reality of God. As Gregory of Nyssa says, God "who holds together nature in existence is transfused [κατεμίχθη] in *us*; while at that other time [time of incarnation] he was transfused [ἐγκέκραται] throughout our nature, in order that *our nature* might, by this transfusion [ἐπιμιξίᾳ] of the Divine, become itself divine."[165] Furthermore, after Christ's resurrection and ascension, at Pentecost the Holy Spirit manifested itself in the lives of Christians on an essentially new level: "He [the Spirit] is no longer present only in energy [ἐνεργείᾳ], but as we may say, substantially [οὐσιωδῶς], associating with us, and dwelling in us. For it was fitting that as the Son had lived with us in bodily form—so the Spirit too should appear in bodily form [σωματικῶς];

164. Finch, "Sanctity as Participation," 319.

165. *Or. Cat*. 25; PG 45:65; NPNF 2 5:495 (emphasis original). Cf. *Or. Cat*. 32.

and that after Christ had returned to his own place, he should have come down to us."[166]

As the image of God in a human being, according to the Cappadocians, lacks sexual differentiation, so a life of purity should aspire to achieve this similitude during earthly life. Therefore, Gregory of Nyssa exclaims, "what greater praise of virginity is there then its being proved that in some way [deifying-θεοποιοῦσαν] those who have a share in the pure mysteries of virginity become partakers of the glory of God, . . . since they participate in His purity and incorruptibility?"[167] Purification of the soul in connection with incorruptibility of virginity are essential elements for adequate participation in, and mirroring of, divine beauty.[168] Approximating to the True Beauty, a human being also becomes both beautiful and beautified, and with the assistance of the Holy Spirit "through his participation in the true light, he will himself be in a state of brightness and illumination."[169] In divine act of creation and the incarnation of Christ we encounter the Christian mystery that lays ground for the union of created human beings with uncreated God. The incomprehensibility and uncommunicability of God's substance, in this case in its Palamite sense (as absolute incomprehensibility and imparticibility of God's essence), can only be implemented if the divine essence is narrowly understood to refer to the full measure of divine infinitude.

In discussion of participation in the Cappadocians, Bradshaw correctly points out that in Basil, participation is "not merely cooperation with God, but actual participation in the divine being."[170] If we do not read the Cappadocians in the post Pseudo-Dionysian and Palamite light, affirmation of participation in the being of God implies a literal understanding of partaking of the divine nature.[171] Being cautious to preserve the sense of divine incomprehensibility in anti-Eunomian polemics, the Cappadocians are more explicit on the issue of participation in the nature of God.

166. Gregory of Nazianzus, *Or*. 41.11; SC 358:340; NPNF 2 7:383.

167. *De virg*. 1; SC 119:258; FC 58:9. "Deifying" is omitted in FC 58.

168. *De virg*. 11.5.

169. *De virg*. 11.4; SC 119:388–90; FC 58:40. Cf. *Vit. Mos*. 2.19.

170. Bradshaw, *Aristotle East and West*, 174.

171. 2 Pet 1:4.

To respond to Palamas,[172] and subsequently to Lossky,[173] it can be pointed out that participation does not have to be identification with participated reality, and certainly not in an ontological sense. For the Cappadocians, partaking of divine nature is participation into the reality of God as God is, regardless of terminological and epistemological predicates. As the reality of God cannot be understood as divided, then human participation is in this reality as it is. The limit of human participation is not in the distinction between particable and imparticable aspects in God, but is only in the sense of its incompleteness due to human created ontological and metaphysical status. The created never can relate to the Uncreated on the same level. How can the finite grasp the reality of the Infinite in its totality? However, human beings can communicate and participate in God.

In the context of the Cappadocian references to human knowledge of God and participation in God, it is hard to disagree with the conclusion that Bradshaw ultimately arrives at, when he states, "God's external activity" is "in some way a manifestation . . . of His internal life."[174] This conclusion, I agree, accurately corresponds with all three Cappadocians. Although, if the manifestation of God himself is also in some way a manifestation of God-in-himself, it is again somewhat difficult to see the distinction between divine *ousia* and *energeiai* in its Palamite interpretation. How seeing in God's internal life some manifested glimpses of God-in-himself is different from some perception of divine essence? Even simple identification of divine names and attributes with divine energies that Bradshaw asserts in the Cappadocians, would not consistently deprive the revelation of God through the medium of those names and attributes, from some form of human knowledge, as incomplete as it can be, about God's essence or God's internal life. Unless, as Bradshaw briefly suggests in another place, that even an eternal self-manifestation within the Godhead independent of creation, such as "mutual love and self-revelation of the persons of the Trinity," is nothing else as intercommunication via divine energy.[175] In this instance God is not only known to human beings through the medium of divine

172. See, for example, Palamas, *Against Gregoras* 4.58; *Against Akindynos* 5.10.

173. See, for example, Lossky, *Mystical Theology*, 69–70; Lossky, *In Image and Likeness*, 56–57.

174. Bradshaw, *Aristotle East and West*, 172.

175. Bradshaw, "Concept of Divine Energies," 113.

energies, but even all communication within the immanent Trinity is basically energetic. Would it imply that hypostases of the Trinity are in apophatic relationship to each other?

Conclusion

I think it can be argued that the distinction between God's essence and energy in Basil's *Ep*. 234.1 is only conceptual, with very limited application for human epistemological and contemplative realization of the divine reality. It does not presuppose the actual distinction in God-within-himself between his incommunicable essence and communicable energies, nor does it prevent human participation in God, nature included, in an inexplicable and not fully comprehensible way for human beings.

As I indicated in the beginning, it was not my intention to engage in a comprehensive discussion on the essence/energy distinction in God in the context of later Byzantine theology, and by no means to deny the legitimacy of this distinction in the context of the Hesychast controversy in the fourteenth-century. However, to attribute the Palamite sense of this distinction to Basil of Caesarea, and to the Cappadocian fathers in general, is not only anachronistic, but also may be misleading. In Palamas, this distinction acquires the significance of ontological and dogmatic antinomy in the understanding of the reality of God and God's relation to his creation. It also serves to explain and legitimize the idea of the reifying experience of the Taboric Light available to human senses, while carefully protecting God's essential invisibility and immateriality. Furthermore, this antinomy not only explains the communicable and uncommunicable aspects of how human beings can know God, but also demonstrates how human beings can relate and participate in God, or what is ontologically particable and imparticable in God. This distinction between *ousia* and *energeiai* for Palamas is not the acknowledgement of a human's limited cognitive ability, but a characteristic of real authenticity within God.

In the Cappadocians, it might be more appropriate to speak not about the essence/energies distinction within God, but about the cognitive differentiation between the essence and energies. This differentiation is present in their theology, however, it is present, so to speak,

economically, and it testifies to a human's earthly ability to know God, but not to the divine reality itself.

As far as divine reality is concerned, is it a reference to divine activity, or the property of divine substance, when we read in 1 John 4:16, "God is Love?" It is very plausible to suggest that, for the Cappadocians, it is both. Similarly, if we say, "God is Good," we characterize the divine substance, where the manifestation of this divine quality or activity will be God's goodness, as humans only can experience, understand, and participate in it. The divine goodness hardly can be viewed separately from the divine essence. Gregory of Nyssa remarks, "The Divine One is himself the Good (in the primary and proper sense of the word), whose very nature is goodness. This he is and he is so named, and is known by this nature." The incomprehensibility of God for Nyssa is safeguarded by the infinity of God's nature, not by its imparticibility. As he continues, "We hold the divine nature to be unlimited and infinite. Certainly whoever pursues true virtue participates in nothing other than God . . . Those who know what is good by nature desire participation [μετουσίαν] in it, and since this good has no limit, the participant's desire itself necessarily has no stopping place but stretches out with the limitless."[176]

When the Cappadocians call God to be Good, Beauty, Love, and Life they refer to the intrinsic qualities of the divine nature, which also are manifested in divine activities. In this sense the names of God are not simply names of divine activities (energies), but pointers to the reality of God as he is. To say that the simple divine nature has qualities or properties does not deny the simplicity of the divine nature. First, the simplicity of the divine essence is not compromised by its relational and dynamic character. Second, in God's intrinsic reality of his substance there is no partiality or division. The divine intrinsic qualities are the very characteristics of the divine Being. God does not participate in love; God is Love. God is the origin, source and the very existing reality of love, goodness, and beauty, not merely "generalized modes of acting."[177] In one place, Nyssa remarks,

> The nature which is beyond thought and which supersedes all power needs none of the things which are thought of as be-

176. Gregory of Nyssa, *Vit. Mos*. 1.7; GNO 7/1:4; Gregory of Nyssa, *Life of Moses*, 31.

177. Bradshaw, *Aristotle East and West*, 171.

> ing connected with the good, being itself the fulfillment of the goods, nor does it exist in the beautiful because of its participation in some beauty, being itself the nature of the beautiful, whatever the mind considers the beautiful to be . . . Outside of the divine nature, nothing exists except evil which (although this is paradoxical) has its existence in not existing . . . What actually exists is the nature of the good.[178]

For Nyssa "the Divine is good in nature. But what is different in nature from the Good is surely something other than the Good."[179] In this respect there is no essential discrepancy between divine and human virtue.

Coming to the knowledge of some divine intrinsic characteristics at the same time does not make God completely knowable. It is impossible for human beings to penetrate and understand the infinite depth of divine love, goodness, and beauty. Humans can only grasp glimpses of their manifestations in the world, but, nevertheless, this limited understanding of divine activity in the world points to the nature that directs those activities. The differentiation between divine substance and energy in the Cappadocians has only epistemological and apophatic significance for human knowing of the reality of God's being. It is a differentiation which is determined by the metaphysical place of human beings in creation, but not an ontological distinction within the reality of God's existence and the relation of divine essence to its activities. Only divisions within the essence of God, for the Cappadocians, are hypostatic distinctions among the Persons of the Trinity.

Thus, by not knowing divine substance, it does not mean that human beings do not participate in the divine nature. Experience of participation and comprehension of this experience is not the same thing. Besides, participation in God's nature does not reveal the fullness and completeness of this nature to the participant, because, again, it is participation according to the natural capacity of the participant. In other words, it is limited and restricted by the natural ontological properties of the participant. In the disproportionate difference between God and human beings this discrepancy exists on all levels, including human knowledge and the ability to communicate, or be united, with God.

178. Gregory of Nyssa, *Anim. et res*.; PG 46:92–93; FC 58:238–39.

179. Gregory of Nyssa, *Vit. Mos*. 2.237; GNO 7/1:116; Gregory of Nyssa, *Life of Moses*, 116.

However, this discrepancy does not negate these abilities. In the best conceivable situation, it is the most complete union of human beings with God as the full realization of human capacity, but it is not complete appropriation and knowledge of God, nor is it the merger of human and divine identities. There is not any form of equation in human-divine union. Human knowledge is not only limited to the full understanding of the divine essence, it is also limited to the full understanding of the created world, including human nature and the self. The emphasis in the Cappadocian theology overall is given not so much even to knowing God, but to the experience of God. What cannot be understood can be participated in, but human knowledge about God always is insufficient, and participation does not entail identification. The Eunomian claim to the absolute knowledge of God and his denial of participation is seen by the Cappadocians as the lack of real experience of God. Praising proper Christian living, Gregory of Nazianzus in one place contrasts it with the strife for adequately elevated understanding, as he exclaims, "Exalt more your life than thought. The life may deify you, but the thought may cause your great fall."[180]

180. *Carm*. 1.2.33.89–90; PG 37:934.

5

Bridging the Gap

Theosis in Antioch and Alexandria

Joel C. Elowsky

Introduction

The ancient Christian writers believed that when the Apostle Peter spoke about our participation in the divine nature in 2 Peter 1, he was speaking of deification, otherwise known, in Greek, as *theōsis,* or *theopoiēsis*.[1] Their choice of such terminology was not cavalier. According to John McGuckin, it was a bold and deliberate move meant to evoke and challenge the pagan language of *apotheosis* where human beings, especially heroes, wise sages, and emperors advanced to the rank of deity.[2] Christian writers avoided the actual term *apotheosis,* however, because it fundamentally transgressed on divine prerogative. Nonetheless, there was a concern, prevalent in the Greek thought of the day, of how to bridge the gap between the human and the divine.[3] The

1. For a more complete history of divinization in patristic literature, see Places, Édouard des, et al. "Divinisation," 1370–98, which is divided between the Greek and Latin fathers. See also Russell, *The Doctrine of Deification* and the collection of essays edited by Finlan and Kharlamov and by Christensen and Wittung (Finlan and Kharlamov, *Theosis*; Christensen and Wittung, *Partakers of Divine Nature*). This paper is based on and uses material from my dissertation, Elowsky, "Participation in Antioch and Alexandria."

2. McGuckin, "Deification," in *Westminster Handbook to Patristic Theology*, 98. See also Norris, "Deification."

3. We see a similar desire of expression in our contemporary context in someone like Jean Paul Sartre, although his understanding of who God is would differ from the ancient Christian writers. Satre writes, "Thus the best way to conceive of the fundamental project of human reality is to say that man is the being whose project is to be God.

Alexandrian answer to bridging this gap was theosis, the idea that human beings, in a certain qualified sense, become gods. Early Alexandrian Christians chose a polemical term and concept in a deliberate confrontation with the paganism of their day in order to differentiate what it truly meant to partake of the divine nature of the one true God. They were careful to note that it was not the polytheism of their pagan neighbors they were espousing. Rather, as Athanasius states, "it is as 'sons' not as the Son; as 'gods,' not as God himself"[4] that we partake of the divine nature. This is an important distinction since the Alexandrian church emphasized there was only one who is God by nature over against classical religion with its deified men and women and its anthropomorphic gods and goddesses.[5]

The Antiochene church emphasized there was only one God as well, but it believed that the Alexandrian approach did indeed transgress the boundaries of divinity, something the Antiochene church was not prepared to do. Thus, it resisted and largely refused to use the terminology of theosis or divinization in speaking of our salvation. This paper is concerned with the reasons behind the acceptance of theosis by Alexandria and the visceral rejection of theosis by Antioch. At stake is not only how we speak of salvation, but how we speak of Christ and our own humanity. Christology is intimately tied to anthropology, and both of these form the basis for understanding theosis and our participation in the divine nature. Thus after looking briefly at the underlying anthropologies of Antioch and Alexandria we will examine how these relate to our understanding of Christ. Undergirding Christology and anthropology are philosophical and terminological distinctions that often have a direct bearing on the reception of theosis in an ecclesial context. The

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Whatever may be the myths and rites of the religion considered, God is first 'sensible to the heart' of man as the one who identifies and defines him in his ultimate and fundamental project. If man possesses a pre-ontological comprehension of the being of god, it is not the great wonders of nature nor the power of society which have conferred it upon him. God, value and supreme end of transcendence, represents the permanent limit in terms of which man makes known to himself what he is. To be man means to reach toward being god. Or if you prefer, man fundamentally is the desire to be God." Satre, *Being and Nothingness*, 566.

4. Athanasius, *Ar*. 3.25.20; NPNF 2 4:405. See Rom 8:17. See also John of Damascus, *On the Orthodox Faith* 4.13 where he states, we "become by *adoption* what Christ is himself by *nature*."

5. Pelikan, *Christianity and Classical Culture*, 318.

ecclesial context in which our present study lies is that of the sees of Antioch and Alexandria. These two sees, in turn are exemplified in Theodore of Mopsuestia and Cyril of Alexandria. For our purposes, we will be focusing on their comments on the Gospel of John, especially in their exegeses of John 17, since this is where arguably their different approaches to theosis become most evident. There Jesus speaks of his unity with the Father and our unity with him and the Father. The teaching of theosis, I believe, lies at the heart of the distinction between Antioch and Alexandria—not only because of its connection to Christology, but because of the intimate connection between Christology and salvation, which ultimately is the end concern of all ecclesial theology. We will conclude by noting how a similar Antiochene ethos and culture of interpretation lies at the heart of Reformed Protestant antipathy towards theosis while finding some level of acceptance among those Protestant traditions more amenable to the tradition rooted in Alexandria, like the Lutherans and Anglicans.

An Anthropological Sketch

In the fourth and fifth century Christological controversies, the intimate connection between Christology and anthropology comes into its sharpest focus. The answer to the question of how Christ is fully human and fully divine established the chief biblical basis for Christ's solidarity with humankind and our redemption. If Christ were not fully human and fully one with our humanity then his work of redemption could not be appropriated by us and had no real effect for our salvation. As the second Adam, he brought redemption to Adam and to all of Adam's descendants.[6] But if we are going to say, as Athanasius did in *De Incarnatione* 54, following Irenaeus, that God became what we are so that we might become what he is, we need to be able to say what it is that God became in Christ and what it is that we are going to become. What does it mean for Christ to be fully human? What does it mean for us to partake of the divine nature? The answer to these questions depends, at least in part, on how one views the first human being, Adam, and his state before the Fall into sin when he brought sin and death into the world. What did humanity look like before sin entered into the picture?

6. Wilken, *Judaism and Early Christian Mind*, 102.

What will humanity look like after the resurrection when sin will have been destroyed?

Alexandrian Anthropology

Was Adam created mortal or immortal? The short answer is that the text of Scripture does not tell us, at least not directly. Paul tells us that the wages of sin is death.[7] Had Adam not sinned, would he have died? The Alexandrian answer would seem to be "no." Then is human nature immortal? The majority of patristic writers, especially those of Alexandria, would answer qualifiedly in the affirmative, since they viewed human nature without sin, in its state before Adam and Eve sinned, as immortal. Sin, however, destroyed human nature and thus all have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God.[8] But the glory of God was there for the taking, if sin had not entered into the picture.

Joanne Dewart notes that most patristic writers, especially those from Alexandria, understood there to be three ages of human existence.[9] We might describe them as: (1) the age before the Fall in paradise when man was immortal and divine; (2) the present age of the world when humankind is mortal and subject to sin; (3) the future age which is yet to come in which humankind will be immortal and not subject to sin. Theodore did not believe there was any prior age when man, in the person of Adam, would have been immortal or divine. Adam was created mortal. Theodore thus held there were only two ages: the present age and the future age. The majority of patristic writers among the Alexandrians and most other Christian writers of the fourth and fifth centuries, however, held that Adam was created immortal and divine; thus the future life would be one of restoration to what humanity was originally intended and created to be.[10]

In his exegesis of John 17:18–19 Cyril explores one aspect of this desire to return to the original image and likeness of God. He asks why it was that Christ, who is holy by nature as God, nonetheless, speaks of sanctifying himself. Cyril relates Christ's desire to sanctify himself back to the common nature he assumed from Adam in the incarnation:

7. Rom 6:23.
8. Rom 3:23.
9. See Dewart, *Theology of Grace*, 37.
10. See ibid., 35–40. See also Greer, *Theodore of Mopsuestia*, 22–27.

> The inspired Moses said concerning man, that God took dust from the earth and formed man from it. He then goes on to tell the manner in which, after the body was perfectly joined together, life was given to it. He breathed, he says, into his nostrils the breath of life,[11] signifying that life was not given to man without sanctification by the Spirit, nor was man entirely devoid or barren of the Divine Nature. For never could anything which had so base an origin have been seen to be created in the Image of the Most High, had it not taken and received, through the Spirit molding it, so to speak, a fair mask, by the Will of God. For as his Spirit is a perfect Likeness of the Substance of the Only-begotten, according to the saying of Paul: "For whom he foreknew, he also fore-ordained to be conformed to the Image of his Son,"[12] he makes those in whom he abides to be conformed to the Image of the Father, that is, the Son. Thus all thoughts are lifted up through the Son to the Father, from whom he [the Son] proceeds by the Spirit. He desires, therefore, the nature of man to be renewed, and molded anew, as it were, into its original likeness, by communion with the Spirit in order that, putting on that pristine grace, and being shaped anew into conformity with him, we may be found able to prevail over the sin that reigns in this world, and may simply cling to the love of God, striving with all our might after whatever is good, and, lifting our minds above fleshly lusts, may keep the beauty of his Image implanted in ourselves unspoiled. For this is spiritual life and this is the meaning of worship in the Spirit.[13]

Cyril sums this all up in relation to Christ by noting that here in John 17:19 Christ is calling down upon us the ancient gift of humanity; in other words, Christ is calling us to become again what Adam was before he lost the image and likeness of God. He is calling for us to be sanctified again through the Spirit in order to have communion with the divine nature.

Christ the Savior was the first to receive this at his baptism when the Spirit remained upon him.[14] Originally, at the creation of human beings, the Holy Spirit was given to man as a seal of the divine image when

11. Gen 2:7.
12. Rom 8:29.
13. Cyril, *Jn*. 11.10. 17.18–19; Pusey 2:719.30—720.24; LF 48:535–36.
14. John 1:32–33.

God breathed into his face[15] the breath of life.[16] Adam and Eve kept the Spirit's presence and the divine image in all its beauty as they followed God's command and lived a life of paradise in Eden. When Adam was led astray, however, by sin

> the likeness to God was then marked with a false stamp through the sin that rushed in, and the engraving was no longer distinct. It became more obscure in him, so to speak, and darkened by the transgression. When the human race reached a great multitude, and sin ruled over all of them, it plundered in many ways the soul of each one, and nature was stripped of the original grace. The Spirit also departed completely, and the rational creature fell into utter irrationality, not even recognizing the creator himself.[17]

After enduring this human condition for a long time throughout the history of the Old Testament, the Creator transformed humanity back to its original image once again through the Spirit, since this was the only way we could regain the image that was lost. Because the first Adam was earthly and from the earth he inclined toward evil and disobedience and fell "back to the earth, the mother from which he came, and now overcome by decay and death, he conveyed the penalty to the whole human race."[18] Sin reigned and human nature was stripped of the indwelling of the Holy Spirit. "For the Holy Spirit of wisdom will flee deceit," as it is written, "and will not dwell in a body enslaved to sin."[19] Therefore, since the first Adam of the earth did not preserve the grace he was given by God, a second Adam from heaven was sent.

> He sent his own Son, who is by nature without variation or change, into our likeness. He knew no sin at all so that, just as through the disobedience of the first we came under God's wrath, so through the obedience of the second, we might escape the curse, and its evils might come to nothing.[20] When the Word of God became man, he received the Spirit from the Father as one of us. He did not receive anything for himself personally

15. Τὸ πρόσωπον αὐτου.
16. Cyril, *Jn.* 2.1.1.32; Pusey 1:182.29.
17. Cyril, *Jn.* 2.1.1.32–33; Pusey 1:183.10.
18. Cyril, *Jn.* 2.1.1.32–33; Pusey 1:184.2–3
19. Wis 1:5, 4.
20. Rom 5:19.

> because he himself is the supplier of the Spirit. But the one who knew no sin received the Spirit as man in order to keep the Spirit in our nature and to root in us once again the grace that had left us. I think that is the reason that the holy Baptist profitably adds, "I saw the Spirit descending from heaven and remaining on him." It flew away from us because of sin, but the one who knew no sin became one of us that the Spirit might become accustomed to remain in us, since the Spirit finds no reason in him for leaving or shrinking back. Therefore, he receives the Spirit through himself for us, and he restores to our nature the original good.[21]

As God he lacked nothing; he chose to become poor by clothing himself with our humanity, as we learn from Paul in 2 Cor 8:9. The one who is life by nature, died for our sakes, *according to the flesh,* "in order to conquer death for us and to raise our entire nature with him."[22] Our nature is restored because "we were all in him because he became man."[23] This is an important point in our discussion which is picked up in his comments on John 17. This second Adam was "one among many brothers, and still human even as we are human. Through being in our likeness, he is seen to be and in fact is the Beginning, and the Gate, and the Way, of every good thing for us."[24]

This is why Christ sanctifies himself for us. But his sanctification did not consist in his becoming holy, since as God he was already holy. Rather, according to the sense of how the term is used in the Old Testament, "That which is brought by any one to God by way of an offering or gift, as sacred to him, is said to be sanctified according to the custom of the Law."[25] Sacrifices were set apart, offered and dedicated as holy to God. Therefore when Christ says he sanctifies himself for us, he means according to Cyril that "he brought himself as a Victim and holy Sacrifice to God the Father, 'reconciling the world unto himself'[26] and bringing the human race that had fallen away back into a relationship

21. Cyril, *Jn.* 2.1.1.32–33; Pusey 1:184.13—185.1.

22. Cyril, *Jn.* 2.1.1.32–33; Pusey 1:184.13—185.6–7.

23. Cyril, *Jn.* 2.1.1.32–33; Pusey 1:185.7–8.

24. He uses the same terminology in his comments on John 1:32–33 and John 17:18–19.

25. Cyril, *Jn.* 11.10; 17.18–19; Pusey 2:721.9; LF 48:536. He cites Exod 13:2, "Sanctify to me all the firstborn, whoever opens the womb."

26. 2 Cor 5:19.

with God."[27] This reunion occurs through communion in the Spirit and sanctification because the Spirit is the one who knits us together and unites us with God.

When we thus receive the Spirit, we are "proved sharers and partakers in the Divine Nature and we admit the Father himself into our hearts, through the Son and in the Son."[28] Without the Spirit, according to Cyril, we could never know that God was in us. Without the Spirit we would not be sons of God and therefore could not be partakers of, or have added to us, the divine nature. However, because we have the Spirit, even now we are made "partakers and sharers in the substance that transcends the universe, and are become temples of God."[29] This could not have happened if Christ had not offered himself up as a sacrifice for our sins because sin would have prevented us from having communion with the divine nature. By offering himself as a sacrifice for us, Christ "built a wall of partition between human nature and sin"[30] so that nothing might hinder our access to God and so that we might return to that original likeness we had at the creation. Just as sin separates us from God, righteousness creates a bond with God that brings us close to God's side so that nothing can separate us from him for, Cyril says, "We have been justified through faith in Christ."[31] In justification, the nature of humanity is entirely reformed and renewed, enabling it through the sanctifying grace of the Spirit to once again ascend to its own first beginning about which Moses wrote in Genesis. This ascension can begin even now in this life as we become conformed to the image of God as we become more and more like him through the gift of participating in the divine nature.

The Alexandrians could hold that our transformation occurs already in this life because their view of time is viewed vertically in what we might perhaps today call a space/time dimension. Thus human beings are able to participate even now in life with God and, to a certain extant, in union with the divine, although this union will only be fully

27. Cyril, *Jn*. 11.10.17.18–19; Pusey 2:722.11–12; LF 48:537.

28. Ibid.

29. Cyril, *Jn*. 11.10.17.18–19; Pusey 2:722.25–27; LF 48:538.

30. Ibid.

31. Rom 4:25. Note here that Cyril sees an important connection between justification and theosis.

realized in the future age.[32] This fit well with the Platonic idea that there is a reality in the spiritual realm that manifests itself in forms here on earth. Thus there are two realities, or worlds, running simultaneously side by side, or, one on top of the other: that which is real, in the spiritual realm, and that which allows the "real" to take shape and form here on earth, the created realm. Thus, we can have our spiritual foot in both worlds, so to speak, as we become conformed to that image which will be more fully formed in us in the age to come.

Antiochene Anthropology

Antioch, however, did not view things in quite this way. The writers from Antioch in general viewed time horizontally and in a linear way, influenced by a different hermeneutical context and culture formed, to a certain extent, by Plato's student Aristotle,[33] where the present age is the only human reality, while the age to come is absolutely future, having nothing to do with the present. There is no interaction between the two. One of Antioch's leading biblical exegetes was Theodore of Mopsuestia. In his commentary on Genesis, he espouses a view of creation divided into two states: the present and the future.[34] There are only two ages: the age of the world and the age of the new world which is to come: the present and the future. There was no age before the Fall in paradise when human nature existed in an immortal state. Theodore believed that God would hardly have changed his mind after just six days concerning human immortality, as though God would have originally created human beings as immortal and then decided against it at the first sign of trouble when they fell into sin.[35] Thus, he viewed the future life as one that would be totally new, with humanity experiencing an immortality it never had before. This would be God's gift at the resurrection when he made everything new. Theodore, in other words, did not agree with the majority of his day that human nature was, by nature, immortal before sin entered into the world, bringing with it death

32. Dewart, *Theology of Grace*, 36.

33. See the comments below concerning Norris' reservations about bifurcating Aristotelian and Neoplatonic influences in Antioch.

34. Dewart, *Theology of Grace,* 36. See also previous discussion under Alexandrian anthropology.

35. *Adversus Assertentes Peccatum in Natura Insistere,* listed as *Contra Defensores Peccati Originalis* in PG 66:1010D–1011A, cited in Dewart, *Theology of Grace,* 38.

and destruction. The resurrection, in Theodore's mind and the minds of those in the Antiochene interpretive culture, would not be a restoration so much as a new creation, as we are resurrected into a new life.[36] Thus Theodore believed that Adam was created as a mortal even before he sinned. Had it been otherwise, he believed, Adam's initial immortality would have led to a self-glorification on his part that, in itself, would have constituted rebellion against God even as it did in Lucifer.

In Theodore's mind, mortality served for Adam, and continues to serve for us, as a pedagogical tool that leads us to humility. This mortality will be replaced one day by sinlessness and immortality after the resurrection when mortality will have served its purpose. Theodore understands immortality primarily, however, as not being subject to further sin; physical immortality is secondary in his mind to the total freedom from sin that is accompanied by an inexpressible joy in the future age.[37] The tendency toward sin will receive complete healing at the resurrection. And once sin has been removed, the result is immortality. Humanity inherited Adam's nature and the punishment for his sin, but according to Theodore it did not inherit Adam's sin and guilt,[38] therefore sin can be done away with once the punishment has been taken away, as it was in Christ and his suffering and death on the cross. The cross and resurrection provide the guarantee of our future immortal life because they have defeated sin.

This has implications for our salvation and the understanding as to whether we in any way can be said to share in any of the divine attributes or share in anything that is divine. In the Antiochene view of human nature, there is nothing inherent in our nature in and of itself that lends itself to being divinized. As creatures, we are totally other than God, evidenced most clearly in the mortality of our human nature. Theodore is strongly opposed to the divinizing language of Alexandria that speaks of humanity as becoming "gods." In his *Catechetical Homily* 4 he says: "Now, one calls men 'gods,' but one does not believe they are gods by nature. Men, you are mortal by nature, something far removed from the nature of God . . . [otherwise] if you

36. Dewart, *Theology of Grace,* 38.

37. Ibid., 41, 43.

38. Ibid., 34.

were gods by nature, you would not be implicated in sin and because of that, susceptible to death."[39]

How, then, are human beings called "gods"? The ontological chasm between mortal, finite humanity and immortal, infinite divinity cannot be broached in Theodore's mind. Thus, the appellation "gods" is fitting to the extant that we are *called* children of God by the grace of the Holy Spirit as we live in the Spirit in this life and flee from sin, emulating our heavenly Father to whom we pray in the Lord's Prayer. It is a name, a title, a description. As Theodore tells his catechumens, "I order you to call Him *our* Father, so that when you have been made aware of the freedom and of the honor in which you have participated and the greatness which you have acquired—things by which you are called the sons of the Lord of all and your own Lord—you will act accordingly till the end."[40] We participate in freedom from sin which is the result of our immortality and we participate in the honor accorded sons and daughters of the King of the universe because we bear that name of sons (and daughters) of God which establishes us in a relationship with God. We are brought close into the immediate proximity of God's glory because of this elevated status, but there is no sense here or elsewhere in his writings that we are in any sense in union with God or divinized. This is because when Christ took on human flesh, in Theodore's mind, that union too was one of proximity rather than transformation.

The Divine-Human Christ of Theodore of Mopsuestia

In the seventh book of his *De Incarnatione* Theodore takes issue with what he believes is at the core of the Alexandrian way of speaking of the unity of the human and divine in Christ as a substantial union. He writes, "Therefore one can say that it is neither by substance nor by operation that the Divine has made a dwelling."[41] The divine and the human are two different substances and only those substances that are the same can be said to come into union with one another.[42] Evident here is the

39. Theodore of Mopsuestia, *Les Homélies Catéchetiques*, 87, English translation in Dewart, *Theology of Grace,* 46.

40. Theodore, *On the Lord's Prayer* 1 in Mingana, *Commentary of Theodore of Mopsuestia*, 7.

41. McLeod, *Roles of Christ,* 177. See. *TEP* 2:293–95.

42. Theodore of Mopsuestia, *Ex Eiusdem Epistola ad Domnum, Fragmenta*; PG 66:1013.

Aristotelian penchant for maintaining categorical distinctions between different substances, which we will discuss further below. The Word set up a tabernacle in our nature, choosing to live in our nature while remaining distinct from it. This is what is meant by the incarnation in Theodore's way of thinking. The Word became flesh and dwelled in us, but he did not *become* flesh in the sense that he was changed—neither Antioch nor Alexandria would hold that the Word changed, because the Word is God and God does not change;[43] rather, according to his comments on John 1:14, the Word was perceived to be human by those who saw him.[44] Theodore would contend that what they were actually seeing, however, was the assumed man, not God the Word who, as God, cannot be seen. But the man whom he assumed can be seen.

Theodore is operating with the biblical model of indwelling, something which the "*en*" in Greek can allow in John 1:14, and which is also found in 2 Cor 5:4. But how is it that the Word dwells in the man it has assumed? Theodore speaks of the union as a "union of good pleasure," reflecting the words of God the Father at Jesus baptism when the Father said, "This is my beloved Son in whom I am well pleased." As he says in his letter to Domnus, "[B]y preserving the two natures unconfused and undivided, the kind of union according to 'good pleasure' affirms one person (*prosopon*) for both, as well as one will and one operation together with one authority and absolute rule."[45] This union of "good pleasure" is referred to by Theodore as a precise, exact union that is inseparable, which is all the more important in the type of union Theodore is espousing. The union is perceived as exact, precise, so that the two appear to be one on the outside, even as they remain distinct on the inside, so to speak.

The terminology that Theodore uses to speak of this union of human and divine in Christ is the Greek term for person, *prosopon. Prosopon* is the concrete outward expression of an inner reality; a *prosopon* is, in essence, what others perceive. In the case of Christ, then, who is human and divine, those with the eyes of faith perceived the divinity that was inside of him even as they saw with their human eyes the humanity that

43. Alexandria would insist that while the divine nature did not change, the Word did change the human nature he assumed, appropriating it and making it his own and divinizing it.

44. Theodore, *Commentary on the Gospel of John the Apostle*; CSCO 4 3:23–25.

45. Theodore, *On the Incarnation* 7; *TEP* 2:295–96.

presented itself outwardly to them as well. They saw these two separate realities manifest themselves as one person, i.e. one *prosopon,* because the outward appearance of Christ expressed this inward, exact union of the two separate entities that existed inside of him via the indwelling of the Word in the man whom the Word assumed at the incarnation. Theodore elsewhere used the analogy of body and soul, that just as a human being is made up of these two different entities—body and soul, which remain separate in the one person whom the outside world sees—so Christ was made up of a human nature and a divine nature,[46] both of which remain separate in the one person (*prosopon*) the outside world sees. Therefore, for instance, when Jesus said he did not speak on his own (Jn 14:10) "he was not indicating anything inferior but was expressing a perfect communion and an inseparable union"[47] between the Word and the assumed man, but still in the one person. Thus, in this one person, the two natures remain separate, but inseparable, in a perfect communion that joins the assumed man to the Word and through the Word to the Father. There are philosophical assumptions that allow for this bifurcation.

Philosophical Suppositions

Following Harnack, it is generally assumed, as mentioned earlier, that Theodore of Mopsuestia and the Antiochenes in general were largely influenced by the philosophy of Aristotle.[48] While it is true that Theodore could hardly have escaped the influence, positive and negative, of the diffused popular Platonism which was the "philosophy" of his day and the customary vehicle of the biblical theology of his time, it is his penchant for Aristotelian categories and his reaction against some aspects of Stoicism (even while he was influenced by Stoicism) that is much

46. Both of which concretely exist as their own separate *prosopa* in the one *prosopon* of Christ.

47. Lat. *communionem perfectam et unionem inseparabilem*; CSCO 4 3:192.

48. Norris, *Manhood and Christ*, 250–52. Norris questions whether such a distinction between Aristotelianism and Neoplatonism in the late fourth and early fifth century does justice to the fact that in this period both philosophies were utilized and were found, in large part, to be in agreement, "and it was this presupposition which encouraged them to assume that the Aristotelian logic was in fact contained or implied in the system of Plato." He notes on p. 6 of his study that Neoplatonic philosophy was in fact "the transmitting agent for Aristotelian thought" and was much more eclectic in its utilization of available philosophies.

more in evidence in his writings. These latter two also informed his understanding and, ultimately, rejection of the language of divinization. Dewart states it this way:

> It has been pointed out that Neo-platonism was a congenial soil for the teaching of divinization, but it is an historical commonplace that the Antiochenes generally, and certainly Theodore, were not Platonists, but were inclined rather to an eclecticism in which Aristotelianism and Stoicism predominated. The validity of this observation is reinforced by Theodore's attitude to this particular question [of divinization]. There is no place in Aristotelianism for this kind of participation in the supreme reality,[49] and it was probably the very existence in Stoicism of a somewhat similar notion that prejudiced Theodore against acceptance of the usual understanding of divinization. The Stoics too taught the dissemination among men of the divine fire (the *logoi spermatikoi*), but its dissemination resulted in a pantheistic monism which put forward the very error that Theodore was most anxious to avoid—the melding of the divine and the human.[50]

This penchant to avoid the melding of the divine and human is evidenced throughout the anthropology, Christology, and terminology of Theodore's *Commentary on John*. These culminate in his comments on John 17 where he outlines a schema for our union with the Father, through the Son in the Spirit as he provides us with a summary of his understanding of how we are joined with the Father in his comments on John 17:11:

> God the Word is joined in his nature with the Father. Through the assumed man's conjunction with God the Word, he also obtained conjunction with the Father. And we, in a similar way, by virtue of the natural conjunction we have with Christ-in-the-flesh, insofar as is possible, also receive spiritual participation with him and are his body, and each of us is a member of his body. Therefore we hope to rise again like him afterwards and to be reborn into eternal life. Thus, by reaching God the Word through him, we necessarily receive *familiaritas* with the Father.

49. As Dewart comments in her note, "It is significant that when Aristotelianism became the most commonly accepted philosophy in the Church, the 'how' of the divinization of man became the possession of God through the informing of intellect and will."

50. Dewart, *Theology of Grace,* 149.

> This is why he said, [17:11] *Holy Father, protect them in your name that you have given me, so that they may be one, as we are one.* In other words, As you joined me with God the Father through the Spirit, and made me worthy of sonship so that I might call you my Father; so also, after conferring the grace of the Spirit, make them your children so that, like me, they also may be one and may have a similar union with you and faithfully call you Father." Paul spoke in a similar manner when he said, "[You have received] a spirit of adoption, in which we cry, 'Abba, Father.'"[51] It is evident that in the Spirit we are worthy of adoption as children and to call God our Father.[52]

The ultimate goal for humanity is to enter into the most intimate relationship with the Father, to be as close to him as possible as his adopted children, evidenced in how our adoption figures prominently in the commentary as well.[53] But there is a *taxis,* an order, that must be followed if this adoption is to occur that brings us into this close relationship with our heavenly Father. This order of our being joined to Christ and through Christ to the Father is spelled out very precisely by Theodore: (1) God the Word is joined in his nature with the Father. (2) God the Word is not only joined to the Father; he is also joined to what Theodore refers to as the "assumed man" by virtue of his indwelling. This indwelling of the assumed man enables him (i.e., the assumed man) to obtain conjunction with the Father. (3) We, then, by virtue of the natural connection we have with the assumed man, because of the common human nature we share, being born from Adam, are joined with God the Word through the nature we hold in common with the assumed man, also known in Theodore's commentary as "Christ-in-the-flesh." Through our being joined together with the assumed man via our common human nature, we, in turn, have the closest, most intimate relationship with the Father because of the Word's union with him.

51. Rom 8:15.

52. Theodore, *Commentary on the Gospel of John the Apostle* 6.17.16; CSCO 4 3:225–26.

53. See his comments on John 1:13 (CSCO 4 3:22); 1:34 (CSCO 4 3:32–33); 3:4 (CSCO 4 3:47); 3:29 (CSCO 4 3:57); 5:19 (CSCO 4 3:77–78); 17:11–12 (CSCO 4 3:224–25); 17:26 (CSCO 4 3:231); 20:17 (CSCO 4 3:251).

The Terminology of Union of Theodore of Mopsuestia

Theodore uses a number of terms here for speaking of the union. The type of union about which he is speaking here is, in Latin, *coniunctio* which is a translation of the Greek word συναφεία. We have translated this as "conjunction" instead of "union" because it better connotes the joining of two things together in a way that respects the etymology of the Greek word, which literally means to "touch together." The word was deliberately chosen by Antiochene theologians to emphasize the integrity that is maintained between the two different entities that come into contact with one another while maintaining a distance as well. The word was also used by such writers as Athanasius early on, and even by Cyril when he wanted to emphasize distinctions, but was favored by the Antiochenes as the expression of choice for speaking of the union that occurs between the human and the divine which also allows the human and divine elements to maintain their distance. Συναφεία/*coniunctio* features prominently in Theodore's comments concerning the relationship between the two natures and also concerning our union with the divine. He does use words such as *unio* or co-mixture,[54] but only rarely.

The other technical term that becomes important in his commentary is the Latin *familiaritas* which corresponds to the Greek οικειώσις. It is a relational term that avoids any idea of mixture or mystical union and succeeds in maintaining distinctions without crossing any boundaries. The etymology derives from the Greek verb οικειόω which means to "claim as a friend," or to "make a relative," like a member of the household.[55] This term, too, was a favored term among the Antiochene interpreters. It connotes proximity and is a relational term that avoids crossing—or even approaching—the ontological divide between creature and creator. We are brought into *familiaritas* with the Father just as the assumed man was brought into the most intimate *familiaritas* with God the Word.

In this schema, there are substantial unions which provide the most intimate type of union, and there are relational unions which al-

54. Theodore, *Commentary on the Gospel of John the Apostle,* 6.6.28; CSCO 4 3:217, "Commixtio est ergo haec et Dei Verbi et hominis quem assumpsit." We will discuss this comment further below.

55. Lampe, *Patristic Greek Lexicon*, 938.

low for more distinction and distance. When the Word is spoken of as joined by nature to the Father, it is a substantial union because the Word is equal and *homoousios* with the Father. The assumed man is not joined to the Father in the same way, however. His union is not a substantial union. The assumed man is joined to the Word through this *synaphic/familiaritas* type of union that allows the two to remain distinct, with the divinity remaining untouched and untainted by humanity. Thus, separation between humanity and divinity in Christ is maintained in Theodore's understanding through the *synaphic* union, or conjunction of the assumed man and God the Word.

Human beings, by the same token, are joined by nature to Adam; it is, in essence, a substantial union that we share with him and his mortality. The man whom God the Word assumed also shares a substantial union with Adam and thus with our human nature. Thus, we share a substantial union with the assumed man, just as the Word shares a substantial union with the Father and the Spirit in the Godhead. But neither we, nor the assumed man will ever share a substantial union with God the Word, or with the Father, or the Spirit. The closest we can get to God is the close, exact, proximate union that the assumed man, the human being *par excellence,* had with God the Word. Separation between humanity and divinity in our humanity's union with God via Christ is maintained by this same *synaphic* union that we have, that establishes a relationship with God, but nothing more. Paul Clayton refers to the soul of the *homo assumptus* in Theodore's Christ as a kind of "buffer state, both ontologically and psychologically, between the immutability of the Word and the mutability of humankind."[56] It is as though Theodore views Christ as the bridge stretched out between humanity and divinity, having the feet touching humanity and the outstretched hands touching the divinity, connecting the two, while also keeping them separate.

The concern is always to protect the divine nature from any contact with creatures. Just as importantly, however, our connection with Christ also provides access to immortality because we are united by nature with Christ-in-the-flesh who rose from the dead, the firstfruits and the first of all human beings to achieve immortality and, through immortality, freedom from sin, which is what enables our relationship with the Father. Sin would otherwise get

56. Clayton, *Christology of Theodoret*, 64.

in the way of this relationship as it separates us from God who is holy and without sin. This blessing and benefit of the resurrection is first made ours through baptism, which is a type of our death and resurrection, enabled by the grace of the Holy Spirit who enables our spiritual rebirth, making us spiritual beings.[57]

An Assessment of Theodore

There are a number of elements in Theodore's exegesis and soteriological pattern that commend themselves. Theodore's emphasis on grace and the divine initiative, the receptivity of the assumed man to the assuming Word, the emphasis on the complete human being and the complete Word. His concern for maintaining the integrity of the divine nature and Godhead apart from creation, in many ways, was a needed corrective to Alexandria and one that Chalcedon in 451 took seriously. Theodore could not, and would not employ the term divinization in his commentary—or anywhere else in his writings, for that matter. He allowed that Scripture called human beings "gods" in Ps 82:6, but in his comments on John 10:36 he clarifies that "Human beings are not changed into the divine nature, but by the grace of God this is what we are called."[58] It is a term of honor. Unlike Cyril's copious references to human beings as θεοί in his commentary,[59] we find no such reference in Theodore's commentary, or anywhere else in his writings, for that matter, except as an appellation, a descriptive name. Dewart concurs: "Theodore refuses to recognize ontological *theosis* in man—even one effected by grace. He says explicitly in the baptismal homilies that the grace of the ~~Spirit, given i~~n baptism, confers on man another superior *human* (emphasis mine) nature.[60] Never will he assign man to even the

57. We are also nurtured in the Eucharist, although Theodore does not emphasize this nearly as much as Cyril does.

58. Theodore, *Commentary on the Gospel of John the Apostle* 4.10.36; CSCO 4 3:216.

59. Cyril's *Commentary on John* has at least forty occurrences where the plural θεοί is used specifically to refer to human beings as "gods," according to a TLG search, not to mention the numerous and various other renderings prevalent in his commentary and other writings concerning divinization.

60. *Catechetical Homily* 14; Tonneau, *Homélies Catéchetiques*, 425, cited in Dewart, *Theology of Grace,* 149.

fringes of divinity."[61] This is certainly the case also with his understanding of the union we achieve with the Father. Theodore understood the term "one" in John 17:21 and even in John 10:30 to mean agreement, similarity, and any number of other things.[62] But he never understands the word to mean any type of substantial or ontological union, because in John 10:30, for instance, it is the assumed man who speaks of his union with the Father, and in John 17:21 it is we human beings who are spoken of as being one with God. Neither could be said to be in union with the Father in any way that might infringe upon divinity because both were created beings (i.e., we and the assumed man, not God the Word). Both exist in a relationship with the Father by virtue of his grace which draws them into the closest of relationships to the Father.

The Terminology of Union of Cyril of Alexandria

Alexandria had a very different answer to the problem of unity between divinity and humanity. This becomes most evident in Theodore's younger contemporary, Cyril of Alexandria, who also wrote a *Commentary on John*. Neoplatonic assumptions, coupled with a different Christology and terminology form a somewhat different answer to how humanity and divinity come together in Christ and in our union with God.

The Arians challenged the church over the Son's relationship to the Father. This challenge was still very much in the mind of Cyril as he sought to affirm throughout his *Commentary on John* the Son's equality with the Father and that he was one with the Father by nature, whereas we become one with the Father by grace. In his opening comments on John 17:22–23, Cyril says that he is justified in speaking of the Only-begotten as having an "essential and natural unity with his Father . . . [and] is to be considered as One with the Father because of his innate identity of Substance [with him]."[63] Here he speaks in concert with Theodore, but also implies more than Theodore does even as he also moves beyond the language of Nicea in speaking in terms not only of ὁμοούσιος but also of ομοφυής,[64] a term which he uses elsewhere in

61. Dewart, *Theology of Grace,* 149.

62. Theodore, *Commentary on the Gospel of John the Apostle* 4.10.31; CSCO 4 3:215. In John 10:30, Theodore says Jesus refers to an oneness of power.

63. Cyril, *Jn*. 11.12.17.22–23; Pusey 3:1.12–14.

64. I.e., of the same growth or nature; ὁμοφυής has the root φυή which is used poetically for φύσις.

his commentary[65] but that is implied here when speaking of the Son's relation to the Father, as well as the Spirit. While Cyril may often seem to make little distinction between φύσις and ουσία, treating them as practically identical,[66] it must be emphasized that when Cyril speaks of our participation in the divine nature, it is not the divine ουσία in which we participate but the divine φύσις.[67] This is something Theodore would not grant. But Cyril is always careful to note that even this participation is not like Christ's who shares an identical nature with the Father and the Spirit[68] while still remaining distinct from them in terms of his self-subsisting hypostasis as a person of the Trinity.[69] It is important that Cyril establishes the Son's common nature with the Father. It is equally important that he establishes the Son's oneness with us. "The completeness of his identification with man on the one hand and with God on the other are of equal importance in order that he may provide the link between the two"[70] in Christ.

The incarnation of the Word is what causes an unbeliever or a heretic to question the Son's equality with the Father, because it was there at the incarnation that "he abdicated, as it were, that place which was his at the beginning, i.e., his equality with God the Father and appears to be far removed from it as though he had stepped outside his invisible glory."[71] In his humiliation, the Son does not appear at all to be God. This is what Paul meant in Philippians 2:7 when he spoke of Christ making himself of "no reputation."[72] Thus, the incarnate Christ

65. See especially his commentary on the Prologue. Pusey 1:21, 39, 54, 79, 82, 84, 86, 97–104, 107, 136, 156, but also elsewhere, Pusey 1:512, 549; 2:18, 102, 463, 544, 546–47, 734.

66. See for example Cyril's comments on the Prologue where he uses both terms to establish the Son's equality with the Father. Cyril, *Jn*. 1.1.1; Pusey 1:39. See also Rehrmann, *Christologie des hl. Cyrillus*, 137, cited in Koen, *Saving Passion,* 54.

67. φυσέως is used in 2 Pet 1:4.

68. Cyril, *Jn*. 1.1.1; Pusey 1:25.21

69. Cyril, *Jn*. 1.1.1; Pusey 1:26.17–19: "I and the Father are one," [John 10:30] says the Savior, because he knows of course that he subsists on his own and so does the Father." Cyril provides a whole series of proofs of this on pp. 25–26, following his normal way of proving his point by copious examples.

70. Wiles, *Spiritual Gospel*, 149–50.

71. Cyril, *Jn*. 11.12.17.22–23; Pusey 3:1.16–18; LF 48:553.

72. Phil 2:5–11 is a favorite passage of Cyril's, almost a "preoccupation," as Koen would have it. See Koen, *Saving Passion,* 95–104.

receives the glory spoken of in John 17:22 as a gift. Cyril tells us: "He who from ancient times and from the very beginning was enthroned with the Father receives this as a gift when in the flesh—his earthy and mortal frame and human form, which, I say, was actually part of his Nature—necessarily received as a gift that which was his by nature, for he was and is in the form of the Father and in equality with him."[73]

Cyril speaks of Christ's one nature here, and throughout the commentary, as a nature which is one with the Father but which also includes "his earthy and mortal frame and human form" as a part of that nature. Cyril often expresses the one subject of Christ in his commentary via the term one nature/μία φύσις or one divine nature/μία θεότητος φύσις.[74] There was only one subject, one nature of God the Word, known according to his humanity and divinity, as the Word took on our flesh and transformed it into the divine.[75]

73. Cyril, *Jn*. 11.12.17.22–23; Pusey 3:1.19–2.1; LF 48:553.

74. See, for instance, Pusey 1:387.20; 2:286.26; 2:417.11; 2:432.3; see also 2.602.9. In his debates with Nestorius, he spoke in terms which he believed came from Athanasius but which actually were borrowed (most likely unknowingly) from Apollinaris, when he referred to the μία φύσις τοῦ θεοῦ λόγου σεσαρκωμένη (the single nature of the incarnate Word). We do not find this particular phrase in his *Commentary on John* written earlier in his career. We do, however, find the roots of the expression and all its components with a strong emphasis on the single subject of the divine nature of the Word who became incarnate.

75. Cyril's emphasis on the μία φύσις in his *Commentary on the Gospel of St. John,* as opposed to the idea of one hypostasis, which he used later in his formula of reunion, is still the preferred mode of expression among those in the Coptic Church who feel that this term most fully expresses the union. Bishop Bishoy of the Egyptian Coptic Church clarified this point in an extended discussion at an international conference on Early African Christianity (Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, April 2008), noting that it was incorrect to refer to the Coptic Church as a Monophysite church, which would imply a simple, single uncomposite nature. Rather, the Coptic Church has maintained Cyril's Christology which favored a *composite nature* consisting of both human and divine elements in one nature— μία φύσις τοῦ θεοῦ λόγου σεσαρκωμένη. The difference lies in the two Greek words μία and μόνος. The former can be understood of a composite unity made up of more than one element while the latter term only allows for a single, undifferentiated entity. In Monophysite Christology, the human is swallowed up or absorbed into the divine like a drop in the ocean. In Miaphysite Christology, the human remains fully human, the divine remains fully divine, but in a union that results in only one entity, which is how the term φύσις is used in the Coptic Church. A comparable example which Cyril used to explain this was the human being who is made up of soul and body, two entities that remain distinct but bring about one person, not too. Theodore used this same analogy, but emphasized the distinction that Paul highlights in Rom 7 with the two ego's battling it out inside the one person (πρόσωπον). Thus, both used the

We should also note that by the time of the fifth century Cyril uses the term φύσις in two senses: (1) the constitutive characteristics, or attributes, that render a certain specificity and reality to a concept—the standard "physical" usage;[76] (2) the Athanasian understanding which came to delineate the notion of an individual being, or existent, as an individual subject. It is the second sense that lies behind Cyril's phrase, which he believed came from Athanasius but which actually was borrowed perhaps unknowingly from Apollinaris: μία φύσις τοῦ θεοῦ λόγου σεσαρκωμένη (the single nature of the incarnate Word).[77] The fact that the phrase came from Apollinaris made it all the more suspect in the eyes of the Antiochenes, who were staunchly opposed to Apollinaris. It sounded to them like Cyril favored a single physical composite of the Word—like Apollinaris' mixture, or fusion, of the respective attributes of God and man which resulted in a truncated humanity that lacked a human soul. Cyril, however, only means that this φύσις was to be understood as the single subject, the single reality of the Word of God and no one else. Μία φύσις designated the one who had become incarnate. In other words, the sole personal subject of the incarnation was the divine Logos and no one else. There was not a human personal subject alongside God in the incarnate Lord, as the Antiochenes held.[78] Thus, Cyril felt perfectly justified in speaking of one nature of Christ, made up of human and divine elements.[79] Thus, when commenting on John 17:4–5, for instance, he writes:

soul/body analogy in order to speak of the union of two different substances but came to different conclusions.

76. Our English word "physical" comes from the Greek φύσις.

77. This phrase is also found, however, in the Liturgy of Gregory of Nazianzus, cf. PG 36:724.1 in its creedal section which also speaks against the two nature, two *prosopa* language of Antioch.

78. Subsequent Chalcedonian usage limited the usage of φύσις however, to the connotation of physical constituents, and Cyril himself began to realize after his debates with Nestorius and the Council of Ephesus of 431 AD that the use of φύσις as a subject-referent could no longer be maintained as he dialogued with Antiochenes such as Theodoret.

79. Although, after the Nestorian controversy and the Council of Ephesus 431, Cyril adapted to speaking of the one *hypostasis* in two natures, which later became the accepted form at Chalcedon. Not all, however, were happy with what they felt was an over-accommodation to Antioch.

> Our Savior's speech now intertwines the human element in His Nature with the Divine, and is of composite nature, looking both ways; not overly merging the Person of the Speaker in the perfect power and glory of his Divinity, nor allowing it altogether to rest on the lowly level of his Humanity; but mingling the two into one, which is not foreign to either. For our Lord Jesus Christ thought that he ought to teach his believers, not merely that he is God the Only-begotten, but that he also became Man for us . . . Although he was only One, he was more precious than all humankind.[80]

Here he speaks of one subject, one composite nature, properly understood, that manifests itself in its humanity and divinity. He then directs us, in the words that follow this quote, to see how this plays out as we follow these two roads of investigation of this passage, noting "that it has reference both to his divine and his human nature."[81] Elsewhere he also speaks of the divine nature and the human nature separately, noting that he says some things as man and others as God,[82] and that Christ took up our human nature.

The Greek word ὡς (as) is a favorite word for Cyril in his Commentary on John in speaking about Christ as a single subject. Whereas Theodore will speak of God the Word doing one thing in the Gospel narrative and the assumed man doing another, Cyril always speaks of the single subject who says or does or has some things attributed to him ὡς Θεός,[83] such as he knows all things *as God,*[84] but there are other things that he does or says or has attributed to him ὡς ἄνθροπος,[85] as man.[86] But they are always actions of the one divine nature of the in-

80. Cyril, *Jn.* 11.6.17.4–5; Pusey 2:671.

81. Cyril, *Jn.* 11.6.17.4–5; Pusey 2:671.

82. See for instance his comments on John Cyril, *Jn.* 7.10.30; LF 48:101–2 where he says, "He who to sight and touch was man was in his nature God."

83. Pusey 1:34.25; 1:55.14; 1:77.15; 1:111.14; 1:113.23; 1:156; 1:167.8; 1:185.2; 1:186.31; 1:198.21; 1:225.19; 1:240.8; 1:245.6; 1:253.19.; 1:256.22; 1:258.6; Pusey 2:50.26; 2:283.10; 2:616.26; 2:665.24; 2:679.18; 2:684.9; 2:689.12, *et passim.*

84. Cyril, *Jn.* 1.1.38; Pusey 1:193.13.

85. Pusey 1:184.22; 1:185.12; 187.21; 1:245.3; 1:257.11, 28; 1:258.13; 1:276.6, 18; 277.10; 1:283.21; 1:331.13; 1:416.6, 14, 19; 1:479.1; 1:489.2; 1:697.25; 2:45.25; 2:80.10–11; 2:127.9; 2:286.6; 2:318.18; 2:467.2, *et passim* (appearing altogether 81 times).

86. Some of the other phrases he uses to indicate this distinction between the human and the divine are delineated by Wiles, *Spiritual Gospel,* 138. Words like "as" and "in so far as" could open Cyril up to the charge that Christ was not really God or really

carnate Word who, due to the divine economy, sometimes reveals his divinity, sometimes his humanity, but always as a single subject, the incarnate Word.

The Divine-Human Christ of Cyril of Alexandria

This is how Cyril solved the issue of uniting the divine and human in Christ. The Word performs divine actions and is divine *according to* his divine nature and the Word performs human actions and is human *according to* his human nature, but it is always the Word who is the divine-human agent of our salvation. In the Alexandrian world-view, the apparent paradoxes that occur in the incarnation such as John 3:16 where God gives his Son to be killed, or where God, in Christ, is crucified—these are "of the essence of the system."[87] Cyril is much more at home with the paradox of God becoming man. He does not try to resolve it. He rejoices in it. It is proof against those who would divide Christ in two:

> For since the Word of God came down from heaven, he [Christ] says that the Son of man came down, refusing after the Incarnation to be divided into two persons, and not allowing anyone to say that the Temple taken by reason of need of the Virgin is one Son, the Word again which appeared from God the Father another—except as regards the distinction which belongs to each by nature. For, as he is the Word of God, so he is man too of a woman, but he is one Christ of both—undivided in regard of Sonship and God-befitting Glory.[88]

Distinct from Antioch, Cyril emphasizes there is only *one Son* who is both Son of God and Son of Man, referred to as one or the other depending on the needs of the narrative at the time which may be speaking about his human or his divine characteristics, but who remains as a single subject of attribution, not two subjects. Thus when John tells us that God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, he is telling us this Son who was sacrificed is God by nature since he came from the

man, making Cyril sound like a docetist. However, Cyril shows how this is not the case when he uses such terms as καθόπερ (in so far as). They are used to demonstrate the voluntary limitations Christ put himself under due to his humiliation.

87. Wiles, *Spiritual Gospel,* 136.

88. Cyril, *Jn*. 3.12–13; Pusey 1:224.

Father and he is the same as the one who also died κατὰ φύσιν as man, but who rose from the dead κατὰ φύσιν as God. The phrase κατὰ φύσιν occurs over 700 times in his commentary and is the dominant expression for when he wants to speak concerning one or the other nature.

Cyril later wrote an entire treatise on this topic *On the Unity of Christ* where he further explains how he can speak of human and divine coming together in one person without speaking of two persons. When he is asked there whether Christ has two natures, that of God and that of man, he responds that Godhead is one thing, manhood is another, "considered in the perspective of their respective and intrinsic beings, but in the case of Christ they came together in a mysterious and incomprehensible union without confusion or change."[89] They are theoretically distinguished and conceivable, but in reality form one individual.[90] When his interlocutor has difficulty with this concept, he uses the same analogy that Theodore used when speaking of the union of body and soul in one person: "Well, do we not say that a human being like ourselves is one and has a single nature, even though he is not homogenous but really composed of two things, I mean soul and body? We do. And if someone takes the flesh on its own, separating its unity with its own soul, and divides what was one into two, have they not destroyed the proper conception of a man?"[91] The soul and body are ontologically united to form one being, the human being. In the same way, divinity and humanity come together in Christ to form one reality, one subject, one nature of God the Word incarnate.[92]

Antioch heard this language from Cyril about one nature formed from the two and surmised that Cyril had created a *tertium quid,* a third

89. Cyril of Alexandria, *On Unity of Christ*, 77.

90. *On Unity of Christ*, 78. See also the extensive discussion by Thomas Weinandy on Cyril's use of the body/soul analogy as a defense of his *mia physis* formula. Weinandy, "Cyril and Mystery," 33–41.

91. Cyril, *On Unity of Christ*, 78. Cyril sounds very Hebraic at this point, not willing to separate the soul and body, although they are distinguished from one another theoretically. Together, however, they make up what it means to be human and we are never fully human unless united in soul and body.

92. Cyril, of course, would later modify his terminology to speak of the one *hypastasis* rather than the one *physis* of Christ, due to his subsequent debates with Antioch, especially in the person of Theodoret of Cyr. I treat this issue more fully in chapter 5 of my dissertation. But his overarching principle of the Alexandrian single subjectivity remained consistent throughout his tenure as Patriarch of Alexandria.

entity, neither fully human nor fully divine, just as Apollinaris had done. As Thomas Weinandy notes, however, the sole point Cyril was trying to make was that Christ is one, just as a human being is one, though composed of two disparate things. "In no way did he use the manner of the relationship between the soul/body, or the mode of union established between the soul/body as a model for the manner of the relationship between the divinity/humanity or for the mode of the union established between the divinity/humanity."[93] Cyril considered the "how" of the incarnation to be a mystery even as he expounded on the "what," i.e., upon the fact that the Word is indeed said to have become flesh and become human. Thus, by using the terminology of "one nature" Cyril was simply emphasizing that Christ was one entity, using the term "nature," as I have previously discussed, in the sense of an individual being or subject.

The Importance of the Single Subject Christology

But now we must ask ourselves why Cyril and the Alexandrians felt it was so important to retain the single subject identity. Cyril found the answer to that question in the incarnation. According to John 1:14 the Word who proceeds from the very substance (οὐσία) of the Father, and having the whole divine nature in himself, became flesh, "blending himself, as it were, with our nature by an unspeakable combination and union with this body that is earthy."[94] He blended himself, a single subject, with our φύσει. The word he uses here for blending himself is ἀναμιγνύς, which means to "mix up," "mix together," "be absorbed"[95] and is more akin to the later Eutychian heresy of the Monophysites that was later condemned at the fifth ecumenical council and no doubt was viewed in Antioch as coming very close to what Apollinaris was saying as well. However, we should not project that dispute back onto Cyril at a point when the vocabulary of union was still being worked out in the church. The other words he chooses to use are συνόδου and ἑνώσεως which also connote the most intimate type of union. The one who was God by nature became and *is* a man from heaven (not just indwelled in a man) while at the same time being God, blending in himself two opposites in a way that Cyril readily confesses is beyond our comprehension:

93. Weinandy, "Cyril and Mystery," 36.

94. Pusey 2:734.24; LF 48:549.

95. Lampe, *Patristic Greek Lexicon,* 113.

> [He became incarnate] in order to unite in himself things that are by nature widely opposed to one another and averse to fusion with each other. He did this so that he might enable human beings to share and partake of the Nature of God. For the fellowship and abiding Presence of the Spirit is extended even to us that originated through Christ and in Christ first when he in fact became even as we are, that is, a Man. He received anointing and sanctification, even though he is by nature God, insomuch as he proceeded from the Father himself, sanctifying with his own Spirit the temple of his body as well as all the creation that owes its very being to him and to which sanctification is suitable. The mystery, then, that is in Christ has become, as it were, a beginning and a way whereby we may partake of the Holy Spirit and union with God. For in him are we all sanctified, after the manner I have just indicated.[96]

In essence, the reason for the incarnation was to unite natures that are widely opposed to one another so that human beings can partake in something utterly above themselves—the divine nature.[97] Our participation in the divine nature and our union with God occurs, according to Cyril, through the presence of the Spirit in Christ who has become a beginning and a way for us to partake of the Holy Spirit. Just as Christ combines humanity and divinity in himself, he paves the way for us to do so as well as he redeems our fallen nature in himself.

This brings us to Cyril's interpretation of John 17:22–23 where he emphasizes that the flesh the Word received from the virgin's womb was not in any way "consubstantial with God the Father or of the same nature."[98] Thus he takes into account the concern that the divine nature be kept inviolate, a concern he would share with Theodore. But then he says:

> Yet, when once received into the Body of the Word, from that time on, it is spoken of as remaining one with him. For Christ is one, and the Son is one, even when he became man. In this aspect [of his person], he is conceived of as having been taken into union [with the Father] being admitted to this [union] even with

96. Cyril, *Jn*. 11.11.17.21; Pusey 2:734.30—735.11; LF 48:549.

97. Theodore also understood the purpose of the incarnation was to unite the human and divine natures in one person. However, as we will see his conception of the union, as a prosopic union, was very different from Cyril's.

98. Pusey 3:2.2–3.

> the flesh which originally did not enjoy union with God. And, to speak more concisely and clearly, the Only-begotten says that that which was given to him was given to his flesh—given too, of course, wholly by the Father, through himself in the Spirit. For in no other way than this can union with God be effected, even in the case of Christ himself, so far as he manifested himself as, and indeed became, human. The flesh, that is, was sanctified by union with the Spirit, the two coming together in an ineffable way; and so unconfusedly attains to God the Word, and through him to the Father, in habit of mind, that is, and not in any physical sense.[99]

Even the Only-Begotten is conceived of as having been taken into union with the Father, albeit according to the flesh which was united to him, even though as Son of God, he was already one with the Father. This union is accomplished by all three persons of the Trinity, including the Son, because this is the only way that union with God can occur. The flesh remains flesh as it is united with God the Word who remains fully God. "His own natural singleness"[100] brings us into such unity, a unity that cannot be broken when it is Christ's Spirit who binds us together in a way that cannot be explained. Cyril emphasizes the oneness of Christ to such an extent because it is the safeguard of our own union with him and our partaking of the divine nature, even as he guards against any crass physical understanding of the union.

The Christ who died in communion with our nature is also the Christ who rose again in communion with the divine nature. It was the Lord's own body that was imprisoned in death and restored to life, "a body that shared in our natural life, though containing in itself in full perfection that peculiar indwelling power so mysteriously united to it, namely an energy capable of bestowing life."[101] Cyril concludes that if anyone would choose to sever the two natures, "let him know that he believes only on the flesh alone. For the divine Scriptures teach us to believe on him who was crucified and died and rose again from the dead as being no other than the Word of God himself."[102] The Word is one, and not two. At his incarnation he did not become flesh by changing

99. Cyril, *Jn*. 11.12.17.22–23; LF 48:554.

100. Cyril, *Jn*. 11.11.17.21; LF 48:551.

101. Cyril, *Jn*. 9.14.1; LF 48:235.

102. Cyril, *Jn*. 9.14.1; Pusey 2:402.

into flesh but by making his own and appropriating the flesh which he received from the holy virgin as a temple.[103] The Word did not change, but he did change our flesh by making it his own. This has direct relevance for how we are made one with the Word:

> And in what sense we are made one with Him, the Lord very clearly explained, and to make the benefit of His teaching plain, added the words: *I in them, and you in Me, that they may be made perfected into one.* For the Son dwells in us in a corporeal sense as Man, commingled and united with us by the mystery of the Eucharist; and also in a spiritual sense as God, by the effectual working and grace of His own Spirit, building up our spirit into newness of life, and making us partakers of His Divine Nature. Christ, then, is seen to be the bond of union between us and God the Father; as Man making us, as it were, his branches, and as God by Nature inherent in his own Father. For there is no other way that nature which is subject to corruption could be uplifted into incorruption, except by the coming down to it of that Nature which is high above all corruption and variableness, lightening the burden of ever sinking humanity, so that it can attain its own good; and by drawing it into fellowship and intercourse with Itself, well-nigh extricating it from the limitations which suit the creature, and fashioning into conformity with Itself that which is of itself contrary to It. We have, therefore, been made perfect in unity with God the Father, through the mediation of Christ. For by receiving in ourselves, both in a corporeal and spiritual sense, as I said just now, him who is the Son by Nature and who has essential union with the Father, we have been glorified and become partakers in the Nature of the Most High.[104]

Our nature is "well-nigh" extricated from our limitations as a creature, according to Cyril, as Christ takes that nature into union with himself. Exact opposites are brought together in Christ—the creature and the

103. Cyril, *Jn*. 10.14.24; Pusey 2:505.21–22. As he later says in his *Homily at St. John's Church, Ephesus,* "Listen again as he says: 'And the Word became flesh' (John 1:14). He did not come in a man, but became flesh, that is, became man. Yet when the Only Begotten Word of God became man he did not cast aside his being as God, for he remained what he was in the assumption of flesh. The nature of the Word is unchangeable and unalterable and cannot undergo even 'the shadow of a variation' (Jas 1:17)." Cyril, *Homily at St. John's Church, Ephesus,* English translation in McGuckin, *St Cyril of Alexandria*, 281.

104. Cyril, *Jn*. 11.12.17.22–23; Pusey 3:2.23–23.16; LF 48:554–55.

Creator. The Creator by virtue of his own power as God expands the limitations of the creature, which he is free to do, providing the creature with the glory that Christ has by nature, and allowing the human individual to be an actual partaker of that nature that is God the Word's that he, as the Word, holds in common with the Father; but is not held in common by nature with the flesh he assumed.

In his comments here on John 17, as well as John 6 and elsewhere, Cyril emphasizes the role of the Eucharist in our union with God,[105] which allows us to take the human and divine Christ into ourselves even now—the one who is Son by nature and man by the nature he assumed, and we are brought into a perfect union with God the Father through Him. "When Christ desires us to be admitted to union with God the Father, he at the same time calls down upon our nature this blessing from the Father and also declares that the power which the grace confers will be a convincing refutation of those who think that he is not from God."[106] When we attain union with the Father through the Son in the Spirit then the world will know that the Father sent him. In other words, the world, according to Cyril, will see that Christ's primary reason for becoming incarnate was to help us due to the mercy of the Father, and this help comes in the form of bringing us into union with his Father and restoring all that was lost by sin. This is more than *familiaritas,* it is more than a *coniunctio.* We are not just called "gods"; we become "sons of God" and "gods," although not by nature but by grace, neither of which Theodore could allow.

Cyril concludes his exegesis of these verses by emphasizing that this union with God that is ours is the result of God's love and mercy, "who showers, as it were, upon us the things that are his, and shares with his creatures what pertains to himself alone."[107] God shares with us what is only his. This is not possible in Theodore's interpretive culture and context. But this is not because Theodore's God is some distant "other" that has nothing to do with his creation. Theodore's concern is that each part of creation knows its place in relation to the One who created all things and that boundaries are respected, especially in terms of Creator and created. The life God has initiated and given in creating us is, after

105. Theodore emphasizes baptism.

106. Cyril, *Jn.* 11.12.17.22–23; Pusey 3:3.17–21; LF 48:555.

107. Cyril, *Jn.* 11.12.17.22–23; Pusey 3:4.28; LF 48:556.

all, ultimately about relationships and about the most intimate relationship we can have with God. We are called his sons and daughters by adoption and as a gift given to us by grace. Cyril chose to speak of this intimate relationship in terms of theosis which, to the Greek mind, was the most intimate relationship one could have with God—more intimate than a synaphic/familiaritas type of union because theosis moves beyond relationship to transformation, a transformation that includes an ontological ascent, although not a change into another nature, although we are "well-nigh" transformed into another nature and provided a union with that nature that does indeed change us.

In Cyril's understanding of our participation, God allows us to be "gods" and "heavenly men" through our union with Christ—albeit by grace and not by nature. The terminology for the union in terms Cyril used like ἀναπλοκὴν (to interweave, mingle or blend), ἀναμιγνὺς (to mix up, mix together, be absorbed), συνόδου (to mix together) and ἑνώσεως all speak to what appears to be a much more intimate type of union than οἰκείωσις/*familiaritas* or συναφεία/*coniunctio.* The same is true in the other areas we have examined in anthropology and Christology. Cyril's understanding of the incarnation is not so much an indwelling as an appropriation. It is Christ *as* a man, not *in* a man, who does and says what he does both as God and man. Cyril expresses this in his commentary by speaking of the single nature of God the Word incarnate. Christ makes our human nature his own so that it becomes one with him and is his. There is no question who it is who has saved us. It is God himself who humbled himself, taking on our nature so that he might offer himself as a sacrifice for us to bring us back to himself and back to what we were originally created to be. Christ thus fully identifies with us as a human being because he *is* a human being even as he is also God. And we are able to fully identify with him as we are conformed to his image through the Spirit who now rests again among and in God's people because of the Word's incarnation and reception of the Spirit at his baptism.

Conclusion

In our examination of these two exegetical approaches to John 17 and the issue of theosis, this study has portrayed what amounts to two hermeneutical cultures. The hermeneutical culture of Antioch, rooted

in Aristotelianism, was organized around maintaining the distinction between the human and divine in Christ and maintaining that separation in the understanding of our participation in the divine nature. The hermeneutical culture in Alexandria, rooted in Neoplatonism, emphasized the union between the human and divine in Christ as well as an understanding of humanity's union with God in terms of theosis, a term which Antioch would not even allow. Both offer critiques and correctives to each other.

The major difficulty of Antiochene Christology, which Cyril and others pointed out, is that in the Antiochene schema it is ultimately unclear who it is who saves us, who it is who died for us. Despite the fact that Theodore felt he was able to address the question of unity by means of his prosopic schema, the fact remains that *prosopon* still connotes primarily outward appearance, even if that outward appearance represents an inner reality. It helps explain what people in the narrative of the Gospels saw when they saw Jesus, and why some only thought he was a man while others realized he was also God. But in the end, as Cyril realized, the prosopic union does not do justice to the unity of Christ, nor to the *kenosis* implicit in that unity and explicit in Phil 2:5–11; it does not take into account fully the fact that God humbled himself in taking on human flesh and becoming obedient unto death so that he could raise our human nature up beyond sin and death to immortality and to a higher level of communion with himself that transforms our nature into what he originally intended when he created us in the first place.

Theodore and other Antiochene writers, on the other hand, believed that the transgressive, sacramental Christology of Cyril crossed uncomfortable boundaries between human and divine. Theodore believed that Alexandrian exegesis and Christology came too close to the pagan idea of the pantheon of the gods. His concerns, too, about Christ being understood as fully human, fully divine in the face of Apollinaris' less than satisfactory use of the *mia physis* formula proved prescient for later Christological formulations at Ephesus in 431 and at Chalcedon in 451. But ultimately the church rejected him (posthumously) even as it rejected his pupil Nestorius at the Council of Ephesus and largely accepted Cyril's formulations, albeit somewhat modified in his interaction with Antioch in the person of Theodoret of Cyr.

And yet today, Theodore and the Antiochene hermeneutical culture are receiving a renewed interest, especially in Protestant Reformed

circles. The reassessment of Theodore's orthodoxy today only seems fair in light of his posthumous condemnation. But while reacting as it is to the excesses of the historical-critical method, Protestant Christian hermeneutical culture has still let that method condition its exegesis and approach toward things divine. It remains in many ways preoccupied with a logical, historical, often compartmentalized approach to exegesis and approach to God. Today much of Protestant Christianity is also struggling to come to terms with a Christ who is fully human, fully divine at one and the same time in one and the same person, the God-man, Jesus Christ. Christianity today either brings God so far down to our level that his transcendence is nonexistent,[108] or God is considered so "other" that any encounter with him seems beyond the limits of human existence.[109] While neither of these extremes should be seen as representative of Cyril or Theodore, respectively, they nonetheless highlight the fact that the hermeneutical cultures of the fifth century christological debates are still very much alive in the Protestantism of the twenty-first century among those traditions that are more at ease with the teaching of theosis and those for which theosis remains suspect. In the former category we would place at least some in the Lutheran and Anglican traditions, in the latter would be the Reformed and more Fundamentalist traditions, broadly speaking, since there are no doubt exceptions in any tradition. This no doubt is a subject in itself for further study in and of itself. We only briefly touch on it here in our conclusion, however, as a catalyst for further discussion.

Anglican tradition has always been more at ease with the patristic writers. Lutheran tradition and its exegesis and Christology have found much in common with Cyril of Alexandria. Reformed theology and some Fundamentalist traditions trace their roots back to Calvin whose exegetical method and Christology were more akin to Theodore and Antioch than to Cyril and Alexandria. As George Hunsinger notes,

108. This is a tendency Thomas Weinandy addresses in his book, *Does God Suffer*, where he challenges the notion of a mutable, changeable God in the face of modern theologies and spiritualities that emphasize a suffering God almost to the exclusion of God's transcendence. Such theologies end up devaluing the sacrifice of the *kenosis* Christ went through for our sakes. On the contrary, Cyril's theology could never explore enough the depths of the Son's *kenosis* for us and for our salvation.

109. See, for instance, the discussion of Karl Barth's theology in Pauck, *Karl Barth*, 107–10. Barth, however, also understood the paradox inherent in the incarnational nature of God. See Hunsinger's discussion of Barth below.

"Luther and Calvin both saw Jesus Christ as one person in two natures whose true deity and true humanity were joined by a relationship of unity-in-distinction. However, where Luther would focus on the unity, Calvin would in turn press the distinction."[110] Calvin, and those in the Reformed tradition who follow his approach to Christology, the sacraments,[111] and hermeneutics, emphasize the distinction between the human and the divine while Luther and those in the Lutheran tradition who follow his approach to Christology, the real presence of Christ in the sacraments, and his hermeneutical approach, will find themselves more inclined toward Cyril's Christology and hermeneutical culture. This is especially exemplified in the Finnish school of thought, which has found the teaching of theosis in Luther to be almost as dominant as Luther's emphasis on justification. And yet not all Lutherans are as open to theosis; many, in fact, remain unclear as to what the teaching even means. There is also the lingering suspicion that theosis does indeed transgress the boundaries between human and divine. But there is also the admission that 2 Pet 1:4 does speak of Christians participating in the divine nature, a scriptural teaching that cannot be ignored.

In our view, the relation of the human to the divine in Christology, anthropology, hermeneutics and the teaching of theosis is consistently what separates the commentaries of Theodore of Mopsuestia and Cyril of Alexandria and the heirs to their hermeneutical cultures. Theodore maintains the human/divine distinction in his Christological distinguishing of the natures; Cyril expresses the freedom to cross the line of that distinction—even while maintaining the distinction—in the paradox of the God-man Jesus Christ, a union he constantly emphasizes is ineffable and beyond comprehension. Theodore expresses our union with Christ and the Father ultimately in relational language, as Scripture itself often does; Cyril expresses our union with Christ as Scripture does as well, by referring to us as gods—albeit gods by grace and not by nature, but gods, nonetheless. Theodore's commentary is an exposition of the text that in many ways is more suitable to the academic setting or a lecture hall. Cyril's commentary is an exposition that explores the mystery of God's continuing creative connection with humanity, becoming

110. Hunsinger, *Disruptive Grace*, 287.

111. Which while Calvin may not have held to the strictly representational presence of Christ that Zwingli did, neither did he hold to the real bodily presence in the way that Luther did.

almost an act of worship itself as it seeks to inform but also shape its ecclesial context and culture. Cyril's Christian culture allowed for such reckless reverence in his biblical interpretation; Theodore's Christian culture was averse to such risk when confronted with the possibility of infringing in any way on divine transcendence.

Ultimately, as we have already noted, in the history of interpretation and in the ancient Christian consensus Cyril's exegesis and approach won the day and Theodore and Antioch were condemned, perhaps unfairly on any number of points, as modern scholarship is recognizing. But the ecumenical consensus ultimately concluded that the Antiochene approach to Scripture and Christology ultimately did not serve the larger church or its life of worship, as evidenced in the church's reception of the *theotokos* in the face of Antiochene opposition. Antioch served nonetheless as a corrective to Alexandria, as Cyril himself tacitly acknowledged to some degree, and its concerns were heard and incorporated into the Formula of Reunion in 433 and into the Council of Chalcedon's 451 formula which confessed "one and the same Christ, Son, Lord, Only-begotten, recognized in two natures, without confusion, without change, without division, without separation." Thus, the correctives of Antioch were incorporated and in some ways proved decisive in the fifth century Christological formulations, although division still remained. The churches of the Reformation remain heirs of this tradition even as they continue to perpetuate the divide between Antioch and Alexandria in their sacramental, Christological and hermeneutical approaches.

Perhaps this is an inevitable divide, and perhaps to those looking in from the outside the divide can appear insignificant. And yet, for those living in the midst of their hermeneutical culture who take that culture seriously the stakes remain as high as they were for Antioch and Alexandria. Christology remains at the heart of any disagreement in the church, especially in the area of sacramental theology and hermeneutics. Antioch and Alexandria were able to come together in a formula of reunion in 433 and later at Chalcedon—although the hope for unity remained elusive for the primary adherents of Cyril among the Copts and the Nestorians. Perhaps it is naïve to believe such a formula of reunion is possible because we are dealing with a hermeneutical culture engrained in those who inhabit those cultures. Nevertheless, it remains incumbent upon all parties to understand that until we find a com-

mon confession of the humanity and divinity of Christ there will be no realization of Christ's prayer in John 17 that they may be one. We strive for that understanding and unity, not for unity's sake or for some institutional expression of unity, but rather so that the world may know that the Father sent his Son in human flesh and that he loves the world just as he loves his Son, and his sons and daughters.

6

Theosis, Texts, and Identity

The Philokalia *(1782)—a Case Study*

Paul M. Collins

In this essay I will investigate the construal of the doctrine of deification in the context of the framing of Orthodox identity in the twentieth century in relation to the reception of the *Philokalia* published in 1782. To begin, I will examine the place of the doctrine of deification in Neopalamite constructs of a doctrinal system and in the construal of Eastern Orthodox identity in the twentieth century. I will then discuss how the use of the *Philokalia* by Russian Orthodox theologians who emigrated to the West after the Bolshevik revolution in 1917 informed these constructs. This will entail firstly an examination of imperatives which led to the publication of the *Philokalia* in 1782, and of the rationale which the editors Makarios and Nikodimos provide for its publication; and secondly an examination of the reception of the *Philokalia* in Russia during the course of the nineteenth century. I will then evaluate the reception of the *Philokalia* as a "canon" of the hesychast tradition and the doctrine of deification; and the consequence of this in producing a "hermeneutical filter," which has formed and informed a Neopalamite construal of Orthodox identity. I will then discuss the rereading of patristic and medieval texts in the light of this hermeneutical filter and the Neopalamite construal of the doctrine of deification and its place in the overall schema of Orthodox doctrinal understanding. I will conclude with a discussion of the metaphor of theosis as a hermeneutic of Orthodox identity today.

This essay emerges from the recognition that the editing, collecting and publication of early church texts is something, which has a pro-

found effect on the construal of Christian identity in the present day. A major component in the construction of the identity of the Orthodox "East" during the twentieth century was the perception that the doctrine of deification is a touchstone of what it means to hold Orthodox beliefs over against a Catholic or Protestant "West." Writers such as Dimitru Staniloae and Andrew Louth have argued that the doctrine of deification, which is a core feature of Orthodoxy, is part of an overarching conceptuality of the divine purposes in creating and redeeming the cosmos in Orthodoxy. The emergence of Neopalamism within Orthodox theological discourse in the twentieth century shaped the interpretation of the "evolution" of the doctrine of deification. Within this discourse two figures dominate the landscape, Gregory Palamas and Maximus the Confessor. Vladimir Lossky and John Meyendorff are seen as responsible for re-awakening interest in the work of the fourteenth century monk of Mount Athos, Gregory Palamas.[1] Lossky argued that the "Eastern" understanding of mystical theology and deification which emerges from Palamas' writing is more adequate and therefore preferable to the "Western" view of divine activity, grace, and the human knowing of God.[2] The construal of the "East" and "West" as perceived from the standpoint of the "Byzantine" Orthodox tradition has been re-assessed recently by Christos Yannaras and Aristotle Papanikolaou.[3] The conceptuality of deification in Orthodoxy today is a synthesis of the ideas of Lossky and Meyendorff constructed further by Orthodox authors in the twentieth century. Texts of the early church and medieval periods are interpreted in part in the light of these twentieth century constructs of deification. Additionally, the interpretation of the reception of the collection of texts known as the "*Philokalia*," published in the eighteenth century is of vital importance in the construction of a narrative of the metaphor of deification and of Orthodox identity in the twentieth century.

Knowledge of the *Philokalia* in the Anglophone world at least was limited until two selections from the collection were translated from Russian and published in the 1950s by Faber and Faber on the encouragement and recommendation of T. S. Eliot. This provided a first

1. See Finch, "Neo-Palamism," 233–49.

2. See Lossky, *Mystical Theology*, ch. 4.

3. Yannaras, *Orthodoxy and West*, especially chs. 1 and 2; Papanikolaou, "Orthodoxy, Postmodernity, and Ecumenism," 527–46.

encounter with this collection of early church and medieval texts for both scholars and those seeking to learn more of "Eastern" mystical theology and practice. The selections were taken from a Russian edition of the *Philokalia* by Theophan the Recluse, who translated the collection from Church Slavonic into Russian in 1877, adding some more texts to the original collection. Interest in these texts arose from a revival on Mount Athos in the mid-eighteenth century in the practice of prayer of the heart (hesychasm), which is often associated with the Jesus Prayer. The publication of *The Way of the Pilgrim* (1884) in Russia popularized this form of prayer and also encouraged the reading of the *Philokalia*. So, perhaps it is no surprise that when Russian Orthodox theologians fled to the West after the Bolshevik revolution the *Philokalia* became a primary source for reconstructing Orthodox identity. So, what is the *Philokalia*?

The period of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries was a time in which Orthodox theology was faced with a number of extraneous influences. The outcomes of the interaction between the Orthodox tradition and Western theological and philosophical traditions produced a revival, in the monasteries at least, in the Hesychast tradition of contemplative prayer. Kallistos Ware has suggested that the second half of the eighteenth century was a moment when Orthodox theologians and monks began to recognize that their tradition was threatened by the influences from Roman Catholicism, Protestantism, and the Enlightenment. In Ware's view, while the Fall of Constantinople in 1453 was an event of enormous significance in terms of the Orthodox understanding of Christendom, in many ways the Orthodox tradition continued to function more or less on the same intellectual and spiritual premises as it had before the Ottoman period.[4] By the second half of the eighteenth century it became evident that there were new intellectual developments among educated Greeks. This has been termed "modern Hellenism," which was more secular in outlook and looked back beyond the Christian era to ancient Greece for its inspiration. It was also influenced by the philosophers of the Enlightenment such as Voltaire and Encyclopaedists.[5] The influence of Latin theology upon Orthodox theology and spirituality had been evident from at least the thirteenth

4. Ware, "Inner Unity," 1.

5. The main exponent of "modern Hellenism" in the eighteenth century was Adamantios Korais. See Ware, "Inner Unity," 3.

century, and this too began to be questioned. A spiritual and theological revival associated with a group of monks from Mount Athos known as the Kollyvades, which commended the practice of frequent communion among other things, emerged in the second half of the eighteenth century. Among that group were Makarios of Corinth (1731–1805) and Nikodimos the Hagiorite (1749–1809), who are understood to be the editors of the collection of texts known as the *Philokalia*, published in Venice in 1782.[6]

The *Philokalia*

A crucial thing to recognize about this collection of texts from the early church and medieval periods is that the reason for its publication was an awareness among Orthodox monks and theologians that there was a problem associated with the new learning of the Enlightenment, as well as the different perspectives of Roman Catholicism and Protestantism. In other words, the *Philokalia* may be interpreted as a product of the Enlightenment. It is a deliberate collecting together of early and medieval Christian sources in support of a tradition of Hesychast or contemplative prayer, which is seen as a distinctive Orthodox practice. It is also offered as a distinctive answer to the issues which the Enlightenment and the perspectives of Roman Catholicism and Protestantism brought to bear upon Orthodoxy. This answer is rooted in an appeal to two core practices: *nepsis* and *hesychia*. *Nepsis* (νεπσις) relates to virtues such as sobriety and watchfulness, and *hesychia* (ήσυχία) to the inner stillness of the heart. In other words this is an appeal to inner, rather than external, action and to the concerns of the kingdom of God within each believer.

The editors of the *Philokalia* express in this collection the need for the Greek Church and nation to remember their distinctive heritage, and that this is best done through reading the mystical theology of the early

6. *The Philokalia of the Holy Neptic Fathers* (Φιλοκαλία τῶν Ἱερῶν Νηπτικῶν), published in Venice in 1782. Partial English translations of the Russian of Theophan the Recluse were published by Faber and Faber in 1951 and 1954. A full English translation is still in production in five volumes by Faber. The first four volumes are currently available the first was published in 1979. "Philokalia" means love for what is beautiful and good, and love for God as the source of beauty and goodness, and also love for what leads to union with the divine and uncreated beauty. Philokalia can also mean "anthology."

church and medieval periods. The method of the editors is to use these sources as a resource to combat the perspective of the Enlightenment philosophers. So, the purpose of the *Philokalia* is primarily practical, and is intended not just for specialists (i.e., monks) but for all. The title page states that it is for the "general benefit of all the Orthodox [εἰς κοινὴν τῶν Ὀρθοδόξων ὠφέλειαν]."[7] Most texts included in the collection were written by monks for monks, but the editors had a much broader audience and purpose in mind. Nikodimos understood that the vocation to "pray without ceasing" is for all Christians, those married as well as monks: those with families; farmers, merchants and lawyers. The preface of the *Philokalia* recognizes that not everyone agrees with such a broad "democratic" intention and purpose. Indeed there might even be risks involved in making the texts available. The editors were clear that having a spiritual director is important, and yet they took the risk of publishing the *Philokalia*. In this way the *Philokalia* may be said to be a product of the Enlightenment in a positive sense, in that its promotion of a democratic reception of the tradition is akin to the agenda of the Encyclopaedists.

Although it would be mistaken to suggest that the only developments within Orthodoxy took place in Russia in the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, I will focus on two figures from the Russian landscape of theology and philosophy as examples of the influence which Russia has on the reception of the Hesychast revival inspired by the *Philokalia* in relation to the formation of Orthodox identity. One figure is primarily an experiential example, and the other theoretical. However, the experiential has doctrinal implications and the theoretical is rooted in personal mystical experience. Both examples testify to the impact of the revived interest in the experiences and practices witnessed in the *Philokalia*.

The witness to the experience of deification in the life of Seraphim of Sarov (1759–1833) is to be seen against the background of the adoption of aspects of the Western European Enlightenment in the Russian Empire from the late seventeenth century onwards. The reforms of the Church by Tsars such as Peter the Great and Catherine II led to the closure of many Russian monasteries. However, during the second half of the eighteenth century there was a spiritual revival within the monastic

7. Cit. in Ware, "The Inner Unity."

life. The life of Seraphim of Sarov provides a clear witness to this revival. His understanding of spiritual warfare and his theology and experience of "charismatic shining" sits in the tradition of the *Philokalia* and the practice of the Jesus Prayer. Seraphim was influenced in particular by Paissy Velitchkovsky (1722–1794) a *staretz* from Moldova. Velitchkovsky had translated the *Philokalia* into Church Slavonic, which was published in St Petersburg in 1793 under the title *Dobrotoliubie*. Some scholars claim that it is through this translation that the *Philokalia* attained its widest influence within Orthodoxy. Velitchkovsky is credited with beginning a neo-Hesychast revival in Russian and Moldovan monasteries, which contributed to a revival of *starchestvo* [staretsism]—the practice of spiritual leadership and direction, which Seraphim himself developed following his time as a hermit. Further evidence of the influence of this movement can be seen in the nineteenth-century publication *The Way of a Pilgrim* (English translation was published in 1972), the work of an anonymous Russian monk, which details the practice of the Jesus Prayer and the study of the *Philokalia*. Tikhon of Zadonsk, bishop of Voronezh (1724–1782) is another witness to this revival. He experienced visions of the divine light and wrote of the transfiguring power of the resurrection, mediated through the indwelling of the Holy Spirit.

Despite his ascetical life and mystical experiences Seraphim was not elitist in his understanding of prayer and spirituality. He encourages his lay disciple Nicholas Motovilov in his catechism on the Holy Spirit by insisting that God makes no distinction between the monk and the layperson: "The Lord hears the prayers of a simple layman just as he does a monk's, provided they are both living in true faith and loving God from the depths of their heart."[8] Such an understanding is an important aspect of Orthodox tradition which is often perceived, perhaps especially by those hostile to or skeptical about theosis as a tradition which favours a spiritual elite of mystic monks. In the teachings of Seraphim there is clear evidence of a corporate and "democratic" understanding of the spirituality which accompanies the metaphor of deification. This is a further development and application of the intentions expressed by Makarios and Nikodimos in the preface of 1782.

Vladimir Solovyov (1853–1900) is one of the main figures in the landscape of Russian philosophy and theology in the nineteenth cen-

8. Cited by Boris Bobrinskoy, introduction to *St Seraphim of Sarov*, by Valentine Zander, xii.

tury. In his early years he rejected Christianity, but found faith again in his late teens and stands within the Russian Orthodox tradition. His approach to faith and religion led him to a strong interest in ecumenism, particularly between Orthodoxy and the Roman Catholic Church. He taught philosophy in the University of Moscow and was known as a poet.[9] It is through poetry that he expressed his mystical experiences. These experiences and his philosophical enquiry together inform his theological views, in which "unity" plays an important role. It is in relation to this focus on unity that he explores the concept of Sophia and expounds his notion of sophiology and his understanding of God-manhood.[10] His experience of the divine light, which he associates with wisdom (Sophia) is expressed for example in the concluding stanzas of the poem, *Three Meetings*:

> Still the slave of the vain world's mind,
> But beneath rough matter's rind,
> I've clearly seen eternal violet, rich royal purple,
> And felt the warm touch of divine light!
>
> Triumphing over death in wisdom's light,
> Stilling the dream of time from its unyielding flight,
> Eternal Beloved, your name is held hid by my utmost plight,
> And forgive my timorous song![11]

Solovyov's exposition of sophiology is something which in the long term was officially rejected by the Russian Orthodox Church, but continues to fascinate theologians today.[12] However, in this instance I will focus on his understanding of unity and God-manhood, which emerge from his reflections on mystical experience and his understanding of deification. These understandings stand more clearly within a traditionally Orthodox framework of Christian theology, and may be said to inform Orthodox identity as it relates to the Philokalic tradition.

Solovyov's focus on unity is manifest in his understanding of the universal character of Christianity, which he expresses in the

9. E.g. Solovyov, *Crisis of Western Philosophy*; *Three Encounters* (*Three Meetings*) (1875).

10. Solovyov, *Lectures on Godmanhood* (1878). [For English translation see Solovyov, *Lectures on Divine Humanity*,—Ed.].

11. Solovyov, *Three Meetings* http://www.poetry-chaikhana.com/S/SolovyovVlad/ThreeMeeting.htm.

12. E.g. Milbank, "Sophiology and Theurgy."

terms: pan-wholeness, worldwideness, and globalism. This ecclesial manifestation of unity is rooted in prior christological claims: "The all-connecting pivot in the unity is the Godman Christ. 'Godmanhood' [*bogochelovechestvo*] is the historical-theological realization of pan-unity."[13] He understands that the union achieved in Christ is a union of things divine and human, a union of spirit and matter, eternity and time, the culmination of evolution, and the beginning of the deification of humankind and the world. "Godmanhood" is an uncommon term, which in Solovyov's usage encompasses not only the divine Incarnation but also its outcome: a redeemed humankind. Solovyov expresses his understanding of redemption in the terms: deification [*obozhenie*], transformation [*preobrazovanie*], and rebirth [*pererozhdenie*], which he understands as not so much a future outcome, but as a present reality. "Redemption is considered to be a harmonic-evolutionary process, instead of an eschatological break in history; and as a cosmic and collectively human event, instead of an appeal from God aimed at the individual human being."[14] Godmanhood is then a collectivist concept, for Christ's "act" of redemption is contained in his cosmic function of re-creator of humankind. Solovyov rejects Western understandings of redemption, both Catholic and Protestant, as satisfaction for the "disturbed legal relation with God." Although, he understands salvation to be collectivist, he warns against any political or ideological understandings of salvation, particularly those associated with socialism; for salvation is understood to be based solely on the divine-human unity, found in Christ and presently in the church. Thus, he understands that the task of the church is to bring about unity for all humankind.[15] The church is the "world-wide [*vsemirnaya*] organization of true life." The church is the mediator between divine life and physical life, it is the divine-human life in which eternity is achieved in time, and which is at the same time the realization of divine love in human freedom. It is, in effect, an instance of collective divine-human synergy. Solovyov's influence is received mainly through his appropriation by Bulgakov. But his understandings of redemption as deification and of the church as the corporate means of achieving Godmanhood in the present remain key

13. Van den Bercken, "Ecumenical Vision," 314.

14. Van den Bercken, "Ecumenical Vision," 314.

15. Solovyov, *History and Future of Theocracy* (1889); Solovyov, *Russia and the Universal Church* (published in French in 1889).

concepts for an understanding of deification which goes beyond the interior experience of the individual.

The reception of the *Philokalia* in the nineteenth century Russia facilitated not only a spiritual revival, but also a theological renewal, which was based on the core element of experience. The concepts which Solovyov developed contribute to an understanding that deification is not simply a private concern or experience, but something which forms and frames the church as a believing community in its relationship with God's purposes for the whole cosmos. I want to suggest that this conceptuality resonates strongly with the original intentions of the editors of the *Philokalia*.

It is now the moment to turn from an examination of the reception, development and application of the publication of the *Philokalia*, to examine how the texts have come to function in the present day as a result of the work of the Russian émigrés in the earlier twentieth century. The editors of the *Philokalia* were followers of the Hesychast practices of prayer associated with Gregory Palamas, a monk of Mount Athos in the fourteenth century. Andrew Louth suggests that the editors created a "canon" for the Hesychast tradition. "What the *Philokalia* does is to canonize a tradition of hesychast spirituality stretching right back from the hesychast controversy to the fourth century; quite what lies behind this creation of a canon is not clear, though it is very likely that the selection derives from many years, probably centuries, of monastic formation: . . . But once seen as part of a tradition, works are read with presuppositions that may be foreign to the spirit in which they were originally written."[16]

So how are the preconceptions and intentions of the editors to be understood and received? Some scholars have argued that Nikodimos was influenced significantly by Roman Catholic spirituality, canon law, and theology. But Nikodimos does not use texts from the Counter Reformation in the *Philokalia*. The collection is not framed as an attack on "the West," rather the collection is offered to all Christians: monks and laity as "a mystical school of . . . prayer."[17]

As an influential collection of texts, the *Philokalia* can be said to be a "hermeneutical filter," which conditions the self-understanding of the

16. Louth, "Light, Vision, and Religious Experience," 89.

17. Ware, "Inner Unity," 12.

Orthodox as well as the perception of the Orthodox by the "non-Orthodox." It has become a hermeneutical filter between early and medieval sources and their reception in the twentieth century, providing the basis for the construction of Orthodox identity and practice. In summary Louth writes that,

> The *Philokalia* . . . has had an enormous impact on modern Orthodoxy: virtually all the great names of twentieth century Orthodox theology . . . can be regarded as standing in a "Philokalic" or "Neo-Palamite" tradition. This tradition of "Byzantine mysticism" is then a living tradition, which only makes it the more difficult to approach it in a critical, scholarly way. Most scholarly work on Byzantine mysticism that has been done in the past hundred years, including the edition of texts, has been done from within this tradition, with the result that the perspective represented by the *Philokalia* has been taken for granted.[18]

The emergence of Neopalamism within Orthodox theological discourse in the twentieth century shaped the "evolution" of Orthodox identity. Within this discourse two figures dominate the landscape, Gregory Palamas and Maximus the Confessor. Orthodox identity today is a synthesis of the ideas of these two writers constructed by Orthodox authors in the twentieth century. This means that texts of the early church and medieval periods are now being interpreted in the light of these twentieth century constructs of identity. And the reading and reception of early and medieval sources is being interpreted through the "canon" of the *Philokalia*. This suggests that attention to the effects of the collecting, editing, and translating of early church texts can reveal the unintentional and unforeseen consequences for the construal of the past, and for the construction of identity in the present.

18. Louth, "Light, Vision, and Religious Experience," 88.

7

Between Creation and Salvation

Theosis and Theurgy

Paul M. Collins

The purpose of this essay is to investigate the potential of "Christian Theurgy" as an expression and means of deification to provide the basis for a correlation of the doctrines of creation and salvation, which offers an understanding of the transfiguration of the created order. This will entail the construal of an understanding of "Christian Theurgy" as an outworking of the divine activity of creating and redeeming, the outcome of which is that God comes to be all in all (1 Cor 15:28; also Eph 1:23). This will also demonstrate the possibility of re-connecting creation and salvation from within resources of the Christian Tradition.

The ancient world envisaged deification for the individual in terms of four possible pursuits or activities, which may be labelled: educational, ethical, mystical, and ritual. The educational path is mainly associated with the pursuit of philosophy, or sometimes popular expressions of philosophy, being less elitist. This path is focused on the soul or the mind and often appeals to metaphors of light, and to concepts of enlightenment or illumination. The ethical path might be pursued in its own right but is often associated with one or more of the other pursuits, and is focused on training the human will through living out the virtues. The mystical path again has elitist and more popular manifestations, some of which include the practice of contemplation. This path is rooted in personal, spiritual experience of some kind and may also appeal to metaphors or experiences of light, which are conceptualized in terms of enlightenment or illumination. The ritual path is also mani-

fested in elite and popular forms and could include magical or liturgical practices to enable the individual to find deification for the soul. This ritual or liturgical manifestation of deification in the ancient world is known as "theurgy" (θεουργία) from the word *theos* and *energeia*, giving the meaning "divine working," "energy" or "action." Rituals were enacted, which were sometimes understood to be magical in nature, with the intention of invoking the action of one or more gods, specifically with the aim of uniting an individual with the divine. This union known as *henōsis* was understood to bring about the perfection of the individual or her soul.

The first surviving record of the term "theurgy" is found in the mid-second century CE work, the *Chaldean Oracles*.[1] There are also examples of the theory and practice of theurgy to be found in the philosophical works of the later Platonists such as Iamblichus. Plotinus had urged that those who wished to perform theurgy should practice contemplation, as part of the overall goal of reuniting with the divine. The school of Plotinus was evidently a school of meditation or contemplation. While Iamblichus of Calcis (in Syria), a student of Porphyry, who was a student of Plotinus, taught a more ritualized method of theurgy that involved invocation of the gods and magical ritual. Iamblichus believed that the practice of theurgy was a form of imitating the gods. In his work, *On the Egyptian Mysteries*,[2] he described theurgic practice as "ritualized cosmogony," which bestowed on embodied souls the divine responsibility of creating and preserving the cosmos. Iamblichus understood that the divine cannot be comprehended through contemplation because what is transcendent is beyond reason. He argues that theurgy is a series of rituals and practices with the goal of attaining the divine essence by discovering traces of the divine in the different layers of being. Through these processes the practitioner of theurgy seeks the soul's innate divinity as well as reunion with the divine.

It is possible to understand Christian worship as a form of theurgy. The rituals of baptism and the Lord's Supper are understood in the writings of St. Paul as means of participating in the death and resurrection of Christ[3] and in the body and blood of Christ.[4] Such New Testament

1. *Chaldean Oracles*, the Greek text as found in Kroll, *De Oraculis Chaldaicis*.
2. Iamblichus, *De Mysteriis*.
3. See Rom 6:3–11.
4. 1 Cor 10:16–17.

understandings are reinforced in the developed doctrine of the Latin medieval church in the concept of the transubstantiation. The change of substance of the bread and wine understood in this doctrine suggest that when the communicant receives the sacramental elements there is an assimilation by the communicant of the divine in Christ. The Eucharist understood in terms of the change of substance or of the Real Presence may be interpreted as a kind of theurgy in the sense that it contributes to the divinization of the participants. In the Greek Orthodox tradition some scholars understand that the liturgy is a form of theurgy, such as Vladimir Lossky who refers to "theurgic actions."[5] Sacramental rituals and other forms of worship may be understood in a thaumaturgical way, which is a nuanced re-reception of the theory of theurgy in Christian tradition. Christian thaumaturgy seeks to understand the liturgy in terms of "miracle" or "wonder," while excluding any magical connotation, by stressing the divine initiative and the human response of faith.

This essay will be developed over five steps. Firstly, I will outline some of the reasons for the polarization of the doctrines of creation and salvation in mainstream Western theological discourse. Secondly, I will examine Bulgakov's theurgic understanding of creative human activity. In the third section, I will consider how Bulgakov's understanding of theurgy can provide a basis for understanding the sacraments as instances of the deification of the cosmos. In the fourth section I will investigate the sacraments of baptism and Eucharist as instances in which created matter is used to celebrate the salvation of the cosmos. Finally, I will set out a theurgic understanding of a correlation of the doctrines of creation and salvation, and the implications, which emerge from such a correlation for the integrity of creation.

In order to construct this correlation I will use a heuristic method—correlating the doctrines of deification and creation by appealing to theurgy as a potentially mediating praxis. To achieve this I will draw on the trinitarian conceptuality of an "event of communion" found in the work of Zizioulas,[6] and of "energetic communion" in the work of Thunberg,[7] in order to create a theurgic correlation of the doctrines of deification and creation.

5. Lossky, *Mystical Theology*, 190.

6. Zizioulas, *Being as Communion*, 17.

7. Thunberg, *Man and Cosmos*, 143.

In his discussion of the conceptuality of *koinōnia* (communion), Zizioulas appeals to the concept of *an event of communion*[8] to denote the dynamic quality of the communion and freedom of the Godhead, which, as he understands it, finds expression in the communion of the three divine Persons. Zizioulas uses the concept of event to explicate the relational ontology of *koinōnia*, not only in terms of the Persons of the Godhead but also in terms of the redemption of the fallen human person. Through baptism the human person is called into a new ecclesial hypostasis in the context of the communion of the church. In the light of the conceptuality of an "event of communion" the human person is to be understood as both "product" and "agent" of the praxis of theurgy. As a consequence of which, I will argue that the conceptuality of an "event of communion" has ontological and soteriological implications for the transformation of the created order.

The "energetic communion"[9] of which Thunberg writes is an expression of the reciprocity and synergy of the human and divine in the process of deification. Through this process the individual—in the context of the body of Christ, receiving the sacraments and practising the virtues—is brought to participation in the divine *koinōnia*. The paradigm of this reciprocity or synergy is found in Christ himself, where the operations of the human and divine wills are understood to be a manifestation of the *perichōrēsis* of the two natures.[10] This synergy of wills or—as Thunberg expresses it—this "energetic communion," is the basis of the believer's sharing in the theandric possibility, which the Incarnation offers to all humankind. This divine-human (theandric) synergy of wills is the means and goal to which the believer is called: to participate in the divine nature (2 Pet 1:4), to be deified. Here again the human person is to be understood as both "product" and "agent" of the praxis of theurgy.

In the first step, I will draw a thumbnail sketch of the reasons for the polarization of the doctrines of creation and salvation in mainstream Western theological discourse.

The treatment of "creation" as a distinct doctrine is perhaps first seen in the writings of Irenaeus in relation to his response to the

8. Zizioulas, *Being as Communion*, 17.

9. Thunberg, *Man and Cosmos*, 143.

10. See Maximus the Confessor's exposition of the events in the Garden of Gethsemane, e.g. *Opuscula* 3; PG 91: 48D–49A.

Gnostics,[11] although earlier Justin Martyr had already expressed the idea of Christian understanding of "the creation."[12] Despite Irenaeus' positive construal of the created order and the Creator God, later writers of the early church period often construed the material "creation" in relation to the "Fall" and its consequences. An example of such construal may be seen in works of Gregory of Nyssa, who constructs his understanding of the post-lapsarian state of humanity (and the cosmos) in relation to his interpretation of the "garments of skin" (Gen 2:21).[13] These garments of skin are put on human beings after "Fall" and are understood to indicate that what can be said empirically to be "human nature" is not the original nature as created by God. This construal of the "Fall" by Eastern writers tends to be focused on human embodiment rather than on the "will," which leaves open the possibility of the human person conforming his/her will (under grace) to the divine will, and therefore the possibility of a theandric "synergy." In the works of Augustine of Hippo the consequences of the "Fall" are focused on the inability of the human will and the lack of true freedom of the will.[14] The consequence of these different emphasises in the interpretation of the "Fall" means that the possibility of the created order co-operating with God's redemptive activity is on the whole excluded by those who follow the Augustinian tradition. The reception of Augustine's works in Western theological discourse provides the basis for much of the later separation and at times polarization of the order of creation over against the order of salvation.

The treatment of creation and salvation as separate themes in scholastic theology is continued and taken a stage further by the Reformers, on the basis of justification by faith alone and the rejection of any place for "works" in the scheme of human salvation. This trend reaches a peak in Karl Barth's rejection of natural theology[15] and the construal of the doctrine of creation through the parameters of Christology.[16] However, I would suggest that Barth's christological construal of the doctrine of

11. E.g. Irenaeus, *Haer*. 2.10.

12. E.g. Justin Martyr, *On the Resurrection* 7.

13. Gregory of Nyssa, *Or. Cat*. 8, PG 45: 33C; *Or. Dom*. 5, PG 44: 1184B. See also Nellas, *Deification in Christ*, 43–104.

14. E.g. Augustine, *On the Grace of Christ and Original Sin*, passim.

15. Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, vol. 1.1: xiii.

16. Ibid., vol. 3.2.

creation can also be received as a positive contribution towards correlating understandings of creation and salvation; particularly if the consequences which Barth draws from his own construal are re-received on the basis of a Johannine understanding of the place and function of the Word (Logos).[17] The continuing tradition of treating creation and salvation as distinct topics in Systematic Theology leaves the impression that the divine purposes can be divided at least into two distinct phases, if not intentions. I want to suggest that this is misleading and is a distortion of the biblical witness, which leads to an under-valuing and possible exploitation of the created order.

In this second step I will examine Bulgakov's theurgic understanding of human activity. This will form the basis for a heuristic approach to correlating understandings of creation and salvation.

Bulgakov's construal of a theurgic understanding of theology emerges from the influence, which Vladimir Solovyov's work has on his thought. Solovyov held a collective and historical understanding of salvation, which he argued reached its final stage in the work of Christ. Christ's work enabled believers to grow in and achieve salvation, understood in terms of deification. Through this influence deification became a central feature of Bulgakov's theological endeavour and it is in relation to this concern for deification that he develops his understanding of theurgy. Bulgakov seeks to distinguish between a Kantian or Marxist understanding of human activity and a Christian understanding rooted in the concept and practice of "theurgy" which brings about the transformation of the world (cosmos).[18] The sacramental activity of the church is Christian theurgy. But Bulgakov also suggests that the twin human enterprises of art and economics may both be understood relative to theurgy, while not being confused with theurgy proper. Both art and economics are understood to be transformative activities, but only fully and properly in relation to each other and the church's theurgy. Insofar as art and economics are pursued in this way they are understood to be aspects of "Sophia," and to express the genuine human vocation of transfiguring the material world under God.[19] On this basis Bulgakov suggests that *human* creativity is an example of "theurgy" (*theou ergon*,

17. See John 1:1–3; 3:16; 14:6.

18. Williams, *Sergii Bulgakov*, 129.

19. Ibid., 130.

God's work). But he distinguishes between (a) the action of God in world (even if accomplished in and through human beings), which is "theurgy" (God's action) in the strict sense; and (b) human action, accomplished by the power of divine Sophia present with it, which is *anthrōpou ergon*, a "sophiurgy" (*ergon ek sophias*). The former is understood in terms of divine condescension, and the latter in terms of human ascent. So there is a distinction between "theurgy" and "sophiurgy," and yet these are constantly mingled in his writing so that there is often ambiguity and a lack of clarity.[20] Theurgy in the strict sense is identified by Bulgakov as the action of God. Theurgy is premised on a soteriological understanding of pardoning and saving grace, which is entirely grounded in the divine initiative. Theurgy is understood to be inseparably connected with the incarnation, so that it is the incarnation itself extended in time and uninterruptedly in the process of its accomplishment. Theurgy is the unending action of Christ in humanity. Christ is the foundation of theurgy and he passes on a theurgic power to the church, which is realized above all in the liturgy of the Eucharist.[21]

In relation to his theurgic understanding of art and economics Bulgakov argues in *Philosophy of Economic Activity* (1912) that knowledge is not a kind of "theatrical representation" but that "*knowledge* is *labour*, willed and active engagement in changing the world."[22] Making sense of the world is not simply to interpret it, but to make new and orderly patterns within it. On this understanding knowing is an "economic" activity, which produces and constitutes value. This production is understood within the context of a program for the "humanization" of the world, in which knowledge and transformation are held together. Thus, "In economic work, man realises this world for himself, constructs his cosmic body and becomes concretely aware of it, realises the authority primordially bestowed on him. Even in his 'housekeeping' role, man retains some reflection of the royal splendour of Adam."[23] It is in relation to such understandings that Milbank argues that Bulgakov's understanding of deification suggests that the divine creative economy is such that all human working is "a coming to know."[24] Inversely, coming

20. Ibid., 130.
21. Bulgakov, "Unfading Light," 156.
22. Williams, *Sergii Bulgakov*, 122.
23. Bulgakov, "Unfading Light," 151–52.
24. Milbank, "Sophiology and Theurgy," 35.

to know is a constant process of collective just distribution: "economy is knowledge in action; knowledge is economy in theory."[25] Bulgakov's theurgic understanding of human creativity in art and economics provides a clear basis for a heuristic approach to construing a correlation of the doctrines of creation and salvation, because "God only reaches us through the liturgical invocations latent in all human creative bringing forth of the unanticipated."[26] In other words, there is a correlation between the creative and redemptive purposes, intentions and actions of God, which finds expression in human activity. God's creation of humankind in the divine image and likeness (Gen 1:26–27) bestows on human activity a theandric reality, which continues despite the Fall. And on this basis human creative activity may be said to be theurgic.

One of the implications of this understanding of the theurgic quality of human creativity activity is, as Milbank has argued, that for Bulgakov to become divine now means constantly to shape better images of deity. The re-shaping of the understanding of divinity in the exposition of the doctrine of deification is also to be found in the Hermetic corpus.[27] The concept of the re-shaping of the understanding of divinity relates to how the difference or distance between the divine and the human is envisaged. Bulgakov's understanding suggests that rather than there being a separation and distance between the divine and the human, that there is instead a closeness, and one might even say an "inter-dependence." The divine activity in creating and redeeming the cosmos and humankind within that cosmos are to be understood in relation to the claim that God seeks to be/become "all in all" (1 Cor 15:28; Eph 1:23). Such understanding of the divine-human relation and its implications in the doctrine of deification provides further conceptual basis for the construction of a correlation of the orders of creation and salvation.

In this third step I want to draw out Bulgakov's understanding of theurgy in order to set out the grounds for understanding the sacraments as instances in which the divine purposes of creating and redeeming suggest the deification of the cosmos.

25. Bulgakov, *Philosophy of Economy*, 131.

26. Milbank, "Sophiology and Theurgy," 36; see also Bulgakov, "Unfading Light," 149–59.

27. Milbank, "Sophiology and Theurgy," 35. See *Asclepius* in Copenhaver, *Hermetica*, paragraphs 22–24, pp. 79–81.

In addition to his emphasis on theurgy and a theurgic understanding of creative human activity, Bulgakov was sympathetic to the Palamite revival associated with the other Russian émigrés in Paris that the praying of the Jesus Prayer itself brings about the "energetic" presence of the divine person of the Logos. This notion is predicated on the belief that "in some ineffable way the sonorous patterns and other sensorial resonances of human language have become attuned over the ages to a certain receptivity of transcendence."[28] However, in Bulgakov's view the premise for the experience of deification is not (so much) the distinction which Palamas and the neo-Palamites draw between energies and essence in the divine, but rather that human beings can become God, because God is constantly becoming human. The pre-condition of the possibility of incarnation is the eternal descent of God into the Creation as Sophia, and the eternal raising of humanity through deification.[29] Bulgakov follows Solovyov in identifying the humanity of God with Sophia and affirms the core meaning of Solovyov's sophiology—God is always the God for "me," that is, for creation. God's being is not dependent on creation, nor is God exhausted in God's relation to creation; God's being, however, is such that God is the God who creates and redeems creation. This conceptualization of the divine-human or theandric relation is also a premise upon which to construct an understanding of the sacraments and the sacramental elements as instances in which the divine purposes of creating and redeeming suggest the deification of the cosmos. The theandric possibility of deification rests upon the theurgy of the liturgy, which in turn suggests the theurgic possibility of creative human activity and of the connection between this activity and knowledge. Thus the human person as both "product" and "agent" of the praxis of theurgy enables the deification of the material cosmos, which is the premise for the correlation of the orders of creation and salvation.

In this fourth step I want to draw out the understanding of the material elements used in the sacraments of baptism and Eucharist as instances in which created matter is used to celebrate the salvation of the cosmos.

28. Milbank, "Sophiology and Theurgy," 36; see also Williams, *Sergii Bulgakov*, 1–19.

29. Milbank, "Sophiology and Theurgy," 53.

The ritual use of water in baptism is often premised on the actual effects of the use of water on human life. Without water life as we know it cannot exist, equally a human being can drown in relatively shallow waters. Water is then a symbol of both life and death, this can be related to the metaphors of John 3 and Rom 6, and to the later construal of baptism and the baptismal font as the "womb" and "tomb" of the church. The word "font" itself relates to water: *fons, fontis*, meaning a spring, source, fountain, or well. Water also suggests washing, and relates both to physical and spiritual cleansing. The ritual use of oil at baptism and confirmation suggests many possible significations. The use of oil to soothe a wound or massage a body requires an element of touch, so that anointing is also a matter of human physicality and gesture as well as being an element in its own right. This highlights a general reality in the celebration of the sacraments that the elements are dependent upon human agency and are contextualized through the human senses and the use of gesture and language. The New Testament texts contain a number of references to being "sealed with the Spirit" which may suggest the use of oil.[30] In a more indirect way the use of oil may be seen to refer to the practice of anointing the king evidenced in the Hebrew Scriptures. The word "messiah" means one anointed with oil and "*christos*" (Christ) is the Greek equivalent. Thus the use of oil in Christian Initiation rites may be said to reinforce the idea of being "in Christ" and of the believer becoming an anointed one: the anointing of the baptized confirms upon each candidate the status of being a "*christos*." The ritual laying on of hand or hands may or may not have originally suggested physical contact between the minister and the candidate. Some scholars suggest that the laying of hand(s) was a gesture of reaching out the arms and hands towards the candidates, rather than physical contact. In later rituals the laying on of hands in Confirmation became a moment of physical touch, a gesture of reassurance and friendship and fellowship, a sign of the gift the Holy Spirit or of strengthening in the Holy Spirit. The ritual meal of the Eucharist expresses the significance of eating in common and being in relation to all the others who similarly share in the meal, as well as being sustained and nurtured in life and health. As St. Paul suggests in 1 Cor 10:16–17 it is a sign of communion and fellowship.

30. E.g. 2 Cor 1:21–22; Eph 1:13, 4:30; Heb 1:9; 1 John 2:20, 27.

A significant step towards embracing new understandings of epistemology in relation to the sacraments was taken by Edward Schillebeeckx in *The Eucharist*.[31] Schillebeeckx famously sought to reinterpret the Tridentine understanding of transubstantiation in terms of semiotics, which was based on the work of the philosopher Husserl and others after him. Since the 1960s Derrida, Barthes, Kristeva and others have developed the understandings of phenomenology and signs with which Schillebeeckx worked, and so the endeavour he began needs now to be updated in the light of such postmodern writings. However, Schillebeeckx's insights continue to make an important contribution to the possibility of sacraments: "Modern phenomenology has developed not an epistemology of the sign, but an anthropology of the symbolic act based on a view of man which is not dualistic. According to this anthropological conception, man is not, in the first instance, an enclosed interiority which later, in a second stage as it were, becomes incarnate in the world through bodiliness. The human body as such is indissolubly united with the human subjectivity."[32] On this basis Schillebeeckx develops his understanding of the symbolic action of the sacraments, which he interprets as collective acts of the church community. It is noteworthy that despite being written almost forty years ago *The Eucharist* has still much to offer in the present day context. The understanding that the sacraments are known and received and done as collective acts resonates well with Derrida's notions of text and context.[33] A semiotic interpretation of the material elements of baptism and Eucharist provides rich possibilities for understanding the rites not only in terms of individual or collective human salvation, but also suggests that the use of material elements to celebrate a sharing in salvation indicates that the elements themselves are signs of a foretaste of the redemption and renewal of the cosmos itself. The human use of created matter to celebrate salvation extends to the possibility of the redemption of matter in the coming of the new heaven and new earth. The ritual use of matter and of human gesture suggests that the cosmos is not only a means of human beings becoming identified with the divine nature and purposes but that cosmos itself is being drawn into an imitation of and

31. Schillebeeckx, *Eucharist*.

32. Ibid., 99.

33. See Smith, *Who's Afraid of Postmodernism?* 34–53.

participation in the divine nature (2 Pet 1:4). Thus the correlation of the material creation and the celebration of salvation in the sacramental use of matter and gesture suggests a continuity of purpose in the divine action(s) of creating and redeeming.

Finally I will draw out the implications for the integrity of creation, which emerge from this construal of a theurgic understanding of theosis, through which the orders of creation and salvation are brought together in correlation.

As a preliminary comment, I want to suggest that the appeal I began by making to the conceptuality of the "event of communion" and "energetic communion" as the basis for a heuristic method may provide a more secure basis for this construal of a theurgic understanding of theosis than Bulgakov's appeal to sophiology. The conceptuality of an "event of communion" and "energetic communion" provides the basis for construing the theandric possibility of deification without recourse to the appeal to "Sophia" which Solovyov and Bulgakov make. Nonetheless, Bulgakov's construal of theurgy and of a theurgic understanding of human creative activity remain crucial for this process of correlation of the orders of creation and salvation.

Zizioulas' appeal to the concept of *an event of communion*[34] denotes the dynamic quality of the relational ontology of *koinōnia*. Such conceptualization of the divine being provides a framework for understanding the creation as "an event of communion" which may also be used to inform the integrity of creation. The church as a *locus* of the process of partaking in the event-character and relationality of the divine nature (2 Pet 1:4) provides the context for the material creation itself to participate in the process of transformation. The Christian praxis of theurgy which is the instantiation of this process of partaking celebrates not only the renewal of creation but also its nature as divine "gift" in creation.

The relationship between the church and creation premised on the theurgical practices of Christification, are expressed in the sacramental life of the church in baptism and Eucharist. The materiality and sacramentality of the theurgical process of christification form the basis for understanding the outcome of deification in terms of creation and re-creation.

34. Ibid., 34–53.

In Christian theurgy the material of the cosmos is received as divine gift and through human agency is transformed into signs of the re-creation of the human creation as well as of the whole cosmos through participation in the divine nature (theosis). Following Bulgakov's construal of theurgy and sacramental matter it is possible to envisage the praxis of theurgy as the paradigm for human creative activity in art and economics. This theurgic human agency suggests a new paradigm for the relationship between the human creation and the cosmos, which challenges models that permit exploitation and domination. Such a paradigm would also receive the animal and material creation as divine "gift" to be celebrated and valued in its own right. The correlation of the orders of creation and salvation through the mediating praxis of theosis demonstrates a theological under-pinning for the integrity of creation, which also expects the transformation of the cosmos as it increasingly participates in the divine life.

8

Participation in God

The Appropriation of Theosis by Contemporary Baptist Theologians

Mark S. Medley

It is a Wednesday evening prayer meeting service at Listre Baptist Church, the center of official religious activity in the slow and predictable town of Listre, North Carolina.[1] Pastor Crenshaw is to preach a sermon on the temptation narratives in Matthew's Gospel. During the sermon six-year-old Stephen Toomey wrestles with the call of Jesus on his heart. Stephen knew "how you got saved"—that if Jesus called you walked down front and told Pastor Crenshaw that you believed in God and Jesus. After the third stanza of "Just as I am"

> Stephen felt Jesus' fingers gently touch his heart. The music was touching his cheeks, his whole face. The whole big room was full of Jesus and music. The color of Jesus was a smoky gray. Jesus was there in his head and in his heart, floating around, calling out—Come, come, come. It was happening. He could almost, but not quite, see Jesus. Jesus was whispering into his heart, words that were not words, words that acted, tugged at him, drawing him down toward the front, down to give his heart to Jesus, down to Preacher Crenshaw, God's man on earth . . . Mr. Crenshaw said to the congregation, "Take that first step, take that first step, take that *first* step." . . . Stephen stepped into the aisle and Jesus was in him, leading him every step of the way. He

1. Material from the first section of this essay appeared in Medley, "Good Walked Spoiled?" 84–105, especially 84–86, 87, and 92. Thanks to Paternoster for permission to use this material.

> was in Jesus. He felt like he was going to cry because he loved Jesus so much. Jesus was saving him.[2]

After Pastor Crenshaw "counseled" another man, concluding with "God bless you. Just have a seat. Fill out the form on the clipboard there. God bless you," he turned to Stephen.[3] Asking the young boy if he accepted Jesus as his personal Savior, Stephen, weeping and sobbing, said "Yes." At this moment, Stephen's mother, Alease, moved out of the pew and walked down to the front to her son. "Her main prayer in the world had been answered. Her son *had been* saved . . . The *final* act had happened. Her son *was* saved."[4]

What novelist Clyde Edgerton recounts in Stephen's "walking the aisle" is an aspect of the worship "experience" common among Baptist congregations of the American South. It reflects the deep conversionist roots of Baptist piety and theology. More specifically, it reflects a narrow understanding of soteriology to a specific "traumatic event which chronicled the day and the moment from here to eternity."[5] This practice of salvation expresses the conviction that if one turns from sin, prays "the sinner's prayer," lets Jesus into one's heart, and believes, one is saved. In other words, this specific experience of regeneration diminishes the journey or story of salvation to a transactional, decisive, voluntary, punctiliar, individual moment which provides immediate salvation, once and for all. The negative effect of such a foreshortening of the drama of salvation for Baptists in the American South has resulted in, first, an overemphasis on justification, understood in almost exclusively forensic terms, and, secondly, an increasing divide between justification and sanctification. Moreover, salvation has been located in the solitary self, whose traumatic conversion experience alone could attest to the efficacy of Christ's work of reconciliation. Thus the soteriological focus is an almost exclusive concern for the gateway to conversion rather than on the *way* of the Christian life.

Historically, Baptists in the American South, reflecting their pietistic and evangelical heritage, have affirmed that every human being is a sinner, and "that this alienation from God could be canceled *on the*

2. Edgerton, *Where Trouble Sleeps*, 222–23.
3. Ibid., 224.
4. Ibid. Emphasis added.
5. Leonard, "Getting Saved in America," 111.

basis of Christ's redemptive work 'for me' . . . *through* faith that simply trusted Christ, *with the result* being a restoration to God's favor that was (from the sinner's point of view) pure undeserved grace, but that was (on the God's-eye view) purchased at the expense of Christ's sacrificial death."[6] As James McClendon says, "This implied Christ's achievement on behalf of each sinner . . . and a corresponding transaction in the interior life of each one who was brought to salvation."[7] Thus, Baptists in the American South, especially in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, have been concerned with the personal experience of conversion, understood as the individual appropriation of justification.[8] They have understood salvation as a mysterious activity of divine grace experienced in the heart of the true believer. Entrance into the life of Christ and his church is based on a regenerative experience of grace in the heart of every believer.[9]

The soteriology of Baptists in America, particularly the American South, accentuated justification at the expense of similar attention to and concentration upon the personal *and* ecclesial "walk in the newness of life." As Edgerton exemplifies in six-year old Stephen's conversion experience in the Listre Baptist Church, salvation was reduced to an absolute, punctiliar, voluntary, interior, individual moment of experience characterized by a certain finality. Yet, such a view of soteriology has been challenged recently by several Baptist theologians.

Integral to the respective attempts of several contemporary Baptist theologians to rethink and revise soteriology is a thematic appropriation of theosis. This essay seeks to explore this surprising and important appropriation of theosis as found in the work of North American Baptist theologians Clark H. Pinnock, Stanley J. Grenz, and Douglas Harink, as well as British Baptist theologian Paul S. Fiddes. These four theologians clearly do not attempt to develop a "doctrine" of deification.[10] Rather, they respectively employ the category of theosis thematically. The term "thematically" suggests that Pinnock, Grenz, Fiddes, and Harink appeal to deification's broad theme that Christian salvation somehow involves

6. McClendon, *Doctrine*, 109–10. Emphasis original.

7. Ibid., 110.

8. Leonard, "Getting Saved in America," 115.

9. Leonard, "Southern Baptists," 11.

10. Olson, "Deification," 186–200, especially 197, contends that Stanley Grenz's account of deification falls short of the Eastern Orthodox doctrine of theosis.

human participation in God's being as they are not only concerned with soteriological questions but also as they engage pneumatology, ecclesiology, and theological anthropology.

After offering a "thick description" of how Pinnock, Grenz, Fiddes, and Harink respectively appropriate theosis, I will critically consider how our four Baptist theologians thematically employ theosis. Particular attention will be given to a Baptist "way of theology," union with God, Christology, theological anthropology, pneumatology, soteriology, and ecclesiology.

Baptist Theologians' Appropriation of Theosis: A Description

Clark Pinnock: Theosis and Pneumatic Soteriology

Perhaps most recently noted for his integral role in the open theism debate among evangelicals, Clark Pinnock (1937–2010) chiefly employs the concept of theosis in a constructive effort to offer an alternative (and complementary) vision of soteriology compared to traditional evangelical Protestant soteriologies which rely heavily on forensic-juridical categories. In his *Flame of Love: A Theology of the Holy Spirit*, Pinnock uses the concept of theosis to speak of salvation as a dynamic process of personal union with God.[11] According to Pinnock, salvation has numerous dimensions (conversion, new birth, justification, sanctification, and consummation). Yet, the goal of salvation "is surely glorification and union with God."[12] He claims, "Salvation is the Spirit, who indwells us, drawing us toward participation in the life of the triune God."[13] Thanks to the grace of Christ, the Spirit summons believers to a transforming friendship with God and into the loving embrace of the triune fellowship. From the perspective of the pneumatology, salvation is to be viewed in relational and affective terms.

In what ways does theosis inform Pinnock's pneumatologically-centered soteriology? First of all, he emphasizes that humanity, created in the image and likeness of the triune God, is truly itself only "in God."[14]

11. Pinnock, *Flame of Love*, 153–55, 173–79. In this stimulating and provocative book, Pinnock sketches a systematic theology with the Holy Spirit as the key.

12. Ibid., 150.

13. Ibid.

14. Ibid., 173–75, 160.

Rather than using such phrases as "participation in God" or "sharing in the divine nature," Pinnock's preferred term for theosis is "union with God." Rather than focusing exclusively on sin categories, he desires to develop a concept of salvation that has as its goal transformation, union, and personal relationship.

To certain evangelical ears, the language of "in God" or "union with God" may suggest some sort of mystical or spiritual relationship with the Creator that diminishes the ontological distinction between Creator and creature. However, Pinnock clearly states that God is ontologically "Other" than the creation. Yet, transcendence does not translate to impersonal distance between the Uncreated and created being. "By the grace of God and *as creatures* we participate in [God] . . . without becoming God."[15] Appealing to the nuptial imagery in the Apostle Paul and in the Revelation of John, as well as Bernard of Clairvaux's commentary on *The Song of Songs*, Pinnock identifies the mystical, loving union of Creator and creature as an intimate, personal one.[16] Theosis identifies the true meaning of atonement, of the reconciliation and "at-one-ment" between God and humanity into which the Spirit, through the Son, is ever drawing people. In keeping with the Orthodox understanding of theosis, Pinnock understands the goal of personal unity between God and the creature as the eschatological consummation of creaturely existence in God, which is sacramentally prefigured in the celebration of the Eucharist.

Second, Pinnock understands theosis as christification. He follows the patristic theological emphasis that deification, or sharing in the divine nature, summarizes the very purpose of the Incarnation: "The loving self-emptying of God (kenosis) evoking a human response (theosis), the divinization of the human person mirroring the humanization of the divine Word."[17] The mystical, loving union between God and the believer restores a person to wholeness by *participation in Christ* through the Holy Spirit. For Pinnock, salvation is Christ being formed in believers; it is to be conformed to the visible image of the invisible God. To be in the image of God is to follow Christ in non-identical repetition of his journey toward the cross. Drawing upon Romans 8, such conformity is

15. Ibid., 154.

16. Ibid., 150, 154.

17. Russell, *Fellow Workers*, 40.

understood as cruciformity. It occurs through the transformative activity of the Spirit indwelling Christian believers so as to incorporate them into the body of Christ and to take up believers into the kenotic currents of relationality between the Father and the Son.

Third, Pinnock appeals to theosis in order to develop a more robust understanding of salvation. As already claimed, for too long evangelical theologies have overemphasized, if not solely identified, salvation as justification, where justification is construed as God's gracious pardon and acceptance of the sinner on account of God's sheer grace embodied in Jesus Christ (especially his death on the cross) and received by faith (often identified with the moment of personal conversion). What troubles Pinnock is that evangelicals have accented so heavily the legal dimensions of justification to the neglect of the Reformation understanding that justification is the basis of sanctification. The Christian experience of salvation is "more than a feeling of relief at having evaded divine retribution." For Pinnock, justification is not the end of salvation, but only its beginning; it points forward toward transformation and union. Justification speaks of a truth (God's gracious pardon and acceptance of sinners on account of God's sheer grace embodied in Jesus Christ and received by faith), but it cannot exhaust what can be said about salvation.[18] He does not pit justification against theosis. Nor does he envision holding the two concepts in tension, or attempt to balance them. In light of Rom 5 and 6, Pinnock contends that justification cannot be thought of without theosis, and vice versa. "For the justified person is baptized into the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. If there is no newness of life, if there is no union with Christ, if there is no coming out form under the dominion of sin, there is no salvation."[19]

Pinnock moves away from the evangelical tendency, on the one hand, to think of, if not reduce, salvation to a punctiliar, voluntary, and interior event in the life of the individual believer; and, on the other hand, to allow such categories as sacrifice, imputed righteousness, and depravity to dominant soteriological concerns. Salvation is much more than Stephen Toomey's walk down the church aisle. While Pinnock does not deride legal or forensic images and metaphors, his appeal to theosis results in accentuating righteousness as participating in God through

18. Pinnock, *Flame of Love*, 155–56.

19. Ibid., 156–57.

faith and by the life in the Spirit. Salvation is a dynamic, arduous process of conversion. It is a living in and out the baptismal vow of obedience and fidelity to Christ. In the ebb and flow of joy and pain, of doxology and lament, of maturing in Christ, the light of God draws believers always higher up into the perfection of human life. The destiny of human conversion has been made visible in the risen, crucified Christ. Salvation as personal transformation culminates in the eschatological consummation of creaturely existence, when the dead gloriously arise "incorruptible and life is renewed in totality."[20]

Fourthly, theosis informs Pinnock's soteriology in that he stresses salvation as a process initiated in this world through the pneumatic incorporation of the believer into the *ekklesia*. It is important that Pinnock treats ecclesiology before soteriology. Theosis is not simply a phenomena of personal transformation in the believer's spiritual and moral life. Incorporation into the body of Christ, the *ekklesia*, is necessary if believers are to be re-created in the image and likeness of God. Through the pneumatic gifts of God in the waters of the baptismal font and in the breaking of the bread of life and sharing in the cup of salvation at the great feast of the table, we are sacramentally drawn into sharing the divine nature.

Fifthly, Pinnock claims that the deification of humanity is not a diminishment of human freedom but rather effects a grace-filled change in humanity's freedom so that the human will cooperates with the divine will. Salvation requires the operation of both divine grace and human will. On the one hand, it involves a movement from God to humanity through God's self-revelation in Christ; on the other hand, it involves a movement from humanity to God through human response in love and freedom. Because union with God is accomplished in Christ, it has a personal character. The encounter with grace takes place through personal communion with Christ. Since the union is the work of the Holy Spirit indwelling humankind, it must involve our free cooperation.[21] On

20. Ibid., 181.

21. Ibid., 160, writes: "We are structured in such a way as to be able to respond to [God]. This is fundamental to human dignity and has not been destroyed by sin. God invites us to turn to God because we *can* turn." The significance of the free human response to the divine initiative of grace becomes a theological basis for Pinnock's acceptance of a doctrine of hell: "the only reason for it is the fact that God honors our freedom that much. [God] refuses to override a no even though he would dearly love to" (ibid., 162).

this point Pinnock's understanding of salvation resembles the synergism of Orthodox soteriology. Divine grace does not run rough shot over the human will. Divine grace respects human freedom. While such synergistic impulses suggest a cooperative partnership, the union of divine grace and human will in salvation is asymmetrical. That is, the activity of God is primary and prevenient; the human response is secondary and subsequent. Grace is necessary for humanity to enter into fellowship with God. Yet, humanity has the capacity to freely choose God's gift of grace, a choice which arises out of and is made possible by an encounter with grace. Human beings necessarily participate in the work of salvation, even if the degree of this participation is diminished by sin. The synergistic process of a union of divine grace and human will is thus, for Pinnock, an ongoing cycle until its eschatological completion, when the person is fully perfected in union with God.

Stanley J. Grenz: Theosis and Ecclesial Selfhood

Whereas Pinnock employs theosis to develop a pneumatic soteriology as an alternative to forensically-oriented evangelical Protestant views, Stanley J. Grenz (1950–2005) considers the anthropological dimensions of deification, utilizing theosis to extend insights in trinitarian theology to anthropology, developing an understanding of the ecclesial self in terms of participation in the life of Christ through the Spirit. He understands theosis as "sharing in the divine life by being 'in Christ' by the Spirit."[22] The principal identifying marks of deification are his frequent reference to "participation in the life of God" and his notion of the ecclesial self as the new humanity destined to glorify and be glorified by the triune God in the age to come.

The chief published work where Grenz turns to the concept of theosis is *The Social God and the Relational Self*. In this work, Grenz develops a trinitarian understanding of the *imago Dei* in the wake of the demise of the modern, individualistic, autonomous self.[23] Instead of drawing directly from the creation story itself for a theological definition of the *imago Dei,* Grenz offers, in chapters 4 through 6 of the book,

22. Grenz, "Celebrating Eternity," 11.

23. Grenz, *Social God and Relational Self*. As he clearly states early on, Grenz's intention is not to offer a complete anthropology in this volume (he does not offer a sustained discussion of sin and sin's effect on the *imago Dei*, a serious weakness of the book) but a response to key issues of postmodernity.

a theological reading of humanity as *imago Dei* from the opening chapters of the book of Genesis to the New Testament story of Jesus Christ, who is the true image of God. In this way Grenz argues for a trinitarian and christologically focused anthropology over an anthropology from creation.

In the concluding chapter of *The Social God and the Relational Self*, Grenz argues that many contemporary, social constructivist models of the self have elevated self-consciousness as the defining feature of the human self. In contrast, what lies at the heart of Christian theological anthropology is not self-consciousness but love. Particularly helpful for developing this truth within Christian anthropology, says Grenz, is the ontology of communion central to late-twentieth-century trinitarian theology. The move of recent trinitarian theology by such theologians as Jürgen Moltmann, Catherine LaCugna, and Metropolitan John Zizioulas toward a communion model in which divinity is understood to be dynamically constituted through mutual, perichoretic relationships of love establishes a theological basis for a new, Christian concept of personhood. The *imago Dei* is best understood trinitarianly (and christologically) as a destiny in and for love. Drawing especially on Zizioulas' communion ontology, it is a vision of the human self constituted by and for loving communion through God's love in Jesus Christ by the indwelling of the Holy Spirit that Grenz proposes as an alternative to both the centered self of modern individualism and the fragmented self of postmodernism.

Reflecting his indebtedness to the second-century theologian Irenaeus, Grenz contends that a trinitarian interpretation of the *imago Dei* must also be understood as a relational and eschatological theo-ontological category. The image, while a present reality of human existence, has its ultimate destiny in Christ. Moreover, this destiny is corporate in nature. The *telos* of Christ is not simply the restoration of the image in an individual believer. It is the fulfillment of personal life in an eschatological communion of saints prefigured in the present ecclesial community, which Grenz calls the ecclesial selfhood.

Specifically, Grenz draws upon theosis to develop the eschatological character of the relational, ecclesial self. While citing Athanasius, Gregory of Nazianzus, and Maximus the Confessor to signify the importance of theosis for patristic anthropology and soteriology, Grenz is particularly drawn to a quote from John Damascene's *Exposition of*

the Orthodox Faith: "Here, that is, in the present life, his life is ordered as an animal's, but elsewhere, that is, in the age to come, he is changed and—to complete the mystery—becomes deified by merely inclining himself towards God; becoming deified, in the way of participating in the divine glory and not in that of a change into the divine being."[24] According to Grenz, Damascene's statement indicates the following. First, theosis does not involve the absorption of the human into the divine, or an eradicating of the ontological distinction between the human and the divine.[25] Second, Christ's saving activity not only effects a divine healing of humanity but also eschatological deification.[26] Third, Damascene suggests that theosis is closely bound up with our being placed "in Christ."[27]

It is this third point that receives Grenz's attention. With much approval, he cites contemporary Orthodox theologian Panayiotas Nellas' claim that deification actually entails christification.[28] Christification not only involves "external imitation" of Christ in the sense of moral or ethical change in life and action; it also means "ontological" transformation of the person as Maximus the Confessor claims: "God the divine Logos wishes to effect the mystery of His incarnation always and in all things."[29] While Grenz asserts that the distinction between an ontological change and a change in personal identity is a false one, it seems that he largely speaks in terms of personal transformation.

Grenz asserts that the New Testament sets forth the theme of christification with its repeated suggestion that participation in Christ means sharing in his filial relationship with God the Father by the Spirit. Yet the Spirit does so in a particular manner. "The Spirit places believers specifically and solely 'in the Son.'"[30] Through the Spirit, those who are "in Christ" come to share the eternal relationship that the Son enjoys with the Father. Those who are "in Christ" by the Spirit participate in

24. John of Damascus, *Exposition of the Orthodox Faith* 2.12, NPNF 2 9:31. Cf. Grenz, *Social God and Relational Self*, 323; "Celebrating Eternity," 9.

25. Grenz, "Celebrating Eternity," 9.

26. Grenz, *Social God and Relational Self*, 323–25; "Celebrating Eternity," 9.

27. Grenz, "Celebrating Eternity," 10; cf. *Social God and Relational Self*, 323.

28. Grenz, *Social God and Relational Self*, 324; "Celebrating Eternity," 9–10.

29. Maximus the Confessor, *To Thalassios: On Various Questions* 63, quoted in Nellas, *Deification in Christ*, 39, quoted in Grenz, *Social God and Relational Self*, 324.

30. Grenz, "Celebrating Eternity," 11; cf. *Social God and Relational Self*, 326.

the Son's act of eternal glorification of the Father. Yet, the divine dynamic into which those "in Christ" are placed is reciprocal.[31] "Because participants in this new community are co-heirs with Christ, the Father bestows on them by virtue of their being 'in Christ' what he eternally lavishes on the Son."[32] Consequently, the Father glorifies, or deifies, those who are "in Christ." Thus, one's future is partially and incompletely present as he or she is enabled to enjoy by grace the trinitarian communion "natural" only to the uncreated Persons. In this way, Grenz affirms the Orthodox doctrinal basis of human deification as found in the hypostatic unity between the divine and the human natures in Christ. Jesus is God hypostatically and in him there is a "communication" of the "energies" divine and human. This "communication" also reaches those who are "in Christ." But believers, contends Grenz, are united to God not hypostatically but only "by grace."[33]

This way of thinking about what it means to be "in Christ" not only strengthens the personal relationship that a person has with Christ, but the relationship that one has with his entire Body, the church. Thus, christification leads Grenz to assert that theosis provides the basis for a fuller understanding of the nature of the church and the church's sacramental life. The church tells the story of the triune God's mission undertaken to be in communion with humanity. The Spirit, by means of placing persons "in Christ," invites each person to enjoy the communion of the persons of the Trinity and, in this way, a transformed communion with other persons who are fellow sharers in the divine nature. Hence, the ecclesial self finds identity through indwelling in God's own dynamic life *in Christo* insofar as the Spirit incorporates persons through their participation in the life of the gathered *ekklesia*. And the Spirit, by means of incorporating persons "into Christ," places persons in one another. The Spirit is thus the author of ecclesial mutuality and solidarity "in Christ." Through the fashioning of the Spirit, the church is the "focal point" of the present experience of the communion of those who are being drawn into the joy of communion and solidarity in Christ as well as a foretaste of the new humanity.[34] To this end, the Spirit engages

31. Grenz, *Social God and Relational Self*, 327; "Celebrating Eternity," 11.
32. Grenz, *Social God and Relational Self*, 326; "Celebrating Eternity," 11.
33. Grenz, *Social God and Relational Self*, 326–28.
34. Ibid., 333–34.

in the work of transforming the body of Christ so as to embody the character of Christ in its own life and mission.

Paul S. Fiddes: Participating in the Life of God

Like Pinnock, Paul S. Fiddes (b. 1947) appeals to theosis to rethink the doctrine of salvation, yet his efforts are aimed at a renewal of Baptist soteriology as compared to Pinnock's general focus on evangelical theology.[35] Like Pinnock, Fiddes gives attention to the economic character of theosis, or how the concept summarizes the whole of God's plan of salvation. In particular, theosis provides Fiddes, in his *Tracks and Traces: Baptist Identity in Church and Theology* and other essays, a theological resource for a Baptist interpretation of the ancient dictum "there is no salvation outside the church." While theosis is not formally treated in any systematic fashion, and direct references to theosis within his work are relatively few, it is a crucial concept in Fiddes' development of the category "participation," the integrating theme within his overall theological *oeuvre*.

Atonement and Theosis

The concept of theosis can be found in Fiddes' early work on atonement. In *Past Event and Present Salvation* the broad contours of his later theology of participation are evident. In regards to our specific topic, he acknowledges the centrality of theosis to patristic and certain medieval understandings of the atonement. In a chapter on atonement as an act of love, Fiddes appeals to Bernard of Clairvaux's vision of atonement as centered upon an infusion of divine love into human nature as a whole through the life and death of Christ to correct the limits of individualism in Abelard's account of the transforming power of divine love.[36] He suggests that Bernard's account "echoes" the Eastern tradition of theosis, and the use of theosis in conjunction with Bernard's account of the atonement can assist in accentuating the cross as affecting the

35. It must be noted that Fiddes appropriation of the concept of theosis is possibly due, in part, to his active involvement in ecumenical dialogue between the Baptist World Alliance and other ecclesial communion, including Baptist-Orthodox conversations. For several years now, Fiddes has served as the chair of the BWA Commission on Doctrine and Inter-Church Cooperation.

36. Fiddes, *Past Event and Present Salvation*, 150–51.

whole structure of human life and society. Yet, for Fiddes, the problem with theosis is its Platonizing tendency to think in terms of individuals participating in universals. How can the "deification" of one particular human nature in Jesus Christ extend to a transformed (yet still corrupt) human nature as a whole?[37]

Cruciformity is Fiddes' response to this question. To explain how cruciformity sheds light on the transforming presence of Christ, he enters into conversation with Friedrich Schleiermacher and Dietrich Bonhoeffer. Initially turning to Schleiermacher's understanding of Christ's "corporate personality," Fiddes ultimately finds this concept wanting because Schleiermacher does not take seriously the God-forsakenness of the cross. He then appeals to Bonhoeffer. The humiliated and crucified Christ (of Bonhoeffer's *Christology*) takes form in space and time in the church. Through the proclamation of the Word, the sacraments, and Christian fellowship, the hidden Christ is present. Yet, it is the wider vision of where Christ is present as articulated in Bonhoeffer's *Letters and Papers from Prison* that captures Fiddes' theological imagination: Christ is hidden and present in those places where God seems weak and powerless. Participation in God involves the Christian's sharing in the sufferings of God with the forsaken in the life of the world. Participation is understood as cruciformity, as human action in the world which fosters the life and love the crucified Christ brought. Christian life and action ought to imitate divine action. Kenotic human life and action in the world involves leaning upon the far deeper movements and mission of self-donation of the triune God's life, as we share in the sending of the Son by the Father and in the obedience of the Son to the Father.[38]

Moreover, to speak of human participation in the divine life, Fiddes asserts that we need to speak of the dynamic and fecund movement of Spirit of God who, in opening up the hidden depths of divine fellowship, takes up into and transforms humanity as well as creation. This pneumatic understanding of participation has affinity with Orthodox notions of deification understood in terms of the Holy Spirit continuing an ascending vocation of humanity toward God by making those in the church "like Christ."[39]

37. Ibid., 152.

38. Ibid., 160–66.

39. Ibid., 153–55, 166–68.

Participating in the Trinity

In the last decade or so, Fiddes, who is influenced by process metaphysics, has drawn from the wellspring of the Orthodox concept of theosis to construct a theology of "participating in the God's life."[40] For Fiddes to consider the implication of the New Testament promise that human beings can become "participants of the divine nature" (2 Pet 1:4) requires not simply a notion of divine "nature" but a trinitarian theology of divine persons or "relations." This means conceiving of created persons as sharing in the interweaving, ecstatic, mutual, and fecund relations of the Trinity. In language that rings of John Damascenes' understanding of the divine act of creation and Jürgen Moltmann's use of *zimsum* in *God in Creation,* and that shows the influence of process metaphysics, Fiddes suggests God "makes room" within the self-donating and kenotic relations between the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit for created beings to dwell.[41]

Yet, how is participation to be understood? How can created beings "indwell" the persons of the Trinity? Do created beings "indwell" the divine persons in the same manner that the divine persons indwell each other? Fiddes addresses these ontological questions by considering the category "person." Rejecting the modern view of "person" as a subject or active, individual agent, he turns to the idea of the person as "subsistent relations" as developed in one stream of Western trinitarianism.[42] He notes that "subsistent relations" does not just mean that the divine persons "can only be *distinguished* by their relations to each other"; nor does the term just mean "that the relations between the persons entirely *make* them what they are."[43] Modern theologians who invoke "subsistent relations" often do so in order to say that the "divine persons are effectively *constituted* by their relations to each other, showing similarities (though eminently) with human persons in relation."[44]

40. Fiddes, "Participating in Trinity," 375–91, is, in many ways, a précis of his theology of participating in the Trinity. See also, Fiddes, *Participating in God*; Fiddes, "Church and Trinity," 65–82; Fiddes, *The Promised End*, 262–88.

41. Cf. Moltmann, *God in Creation*, 86–93.

42. For a more detailed discussion of persons as subsistent relations, see Fiddes' argument in *Participating in God*, 34–46.

43. Fiddes, "Participating in the Trinity," 380. The former view Fiddes identifies with Athanasius; the latter view he identifies with the Cappadocians.

44. Ibid., 381.

For Fiddes, "subsistent relations" has an even more "radical level of meaning." He states: "[Subsistent relations] proposes that relations in God are as real and 'beingful' as anything which is created or uncreated, and that their ground of existence is in themselves. If we use the term *hypostasis* as the fathers did for a 'distinct reality' which has being, then the relations *are* hypostases. There are no persons 'at the end of a relation,' but the 'persons' are simply the relations."[45]

He argues that Augustine moved toward this meaning of subsistent relations in *De Trinitate* and Thomas Aquinas gave formality to this idea by coining the term "subsistent relations." Unfortunately, Aquinas, according to Fiddes, undercuts the dynamic potential of the term by explaining the subsistence of the relationships in terms of the relations as identical with the one essence of God: "They subsist because they are *the same* as the one divine substance which itself has self-expression."[46]

Fiddes builds upon the inertia of Augustine's and Aquinas' understanding of "subsistent relations" by reorienting the meaning of the term in light of Karl Barth's understanding of the "event" character of God. Doing so allows one to speak of God as "three movements of relationship subsisting in one event."[47] Focusing on *relations* rather than persons who have relations moves from an ontology of substance to an ontology of event. Correspondingly, talk about the triune God as an event of relationships is not the language of an observer, but rather the language of a participant. For Fiddes, ontology is thus deeply related to epistemology. An ontology of event suggests that a doctrine of the Trinity constructed upon an understanding subsistent relations "makes it clear that it is impossible to know or speak about God" as if God were an object to be controlled by human perception.[48] While the empirical world can be known—at least partially and incompletely—as an object of investigation, knowledge of the divine arises through human participation in God. Drawing upon the work of Alan Torrance, Fiddes declares that God's self-revelation to us "shapes human language and creates metaphors which *enable* us to enjoy 'both doxological and

45. Ibid.
46. Ibid.
47. Ibid.
48. Fiddes, *Participation in God*, 39.

semantic participation in God.'"[49] Personal language about and to God "provokes participation in God, but this language only makes sense at all in terms of our involvement in the network of relationships in which God happens."[50]

To support this assertion of a doxological and semantic understanding of participation, Fiddes appeals to the practice of prayer. The New Testament portrays the vocative language of prayer as *address* "to" the Father, "through" the Son, and "in" the Spirit. Through the practice of corporate and individual prayer, we find our address to God fitting into a movement like that of the speech between a father and a child, our response of "yes" leaning upon a filial "yes" of humble obedience, glorifying the Father, a response which is already there.[51] Moreover, the paternal-filial movements are interlaced by a third movement, "as we find that they are continually being opened up to new depths of relationship and to new possibilities of the future by movement we can only call 'Spirit.'"[52]

Thus, through our participation, we can identify three distinct movements of mutual, dynamic, ecstatic, and giving relationship: "from father to son," "from son to father," and "deepening relationships."[53] We are able to be caught up in the currents of communion between the Father, the Son, and the Spirit because it is only through the particular human sonship of Jesus in the power of the Spirit that we enter the communion of God's being.[54] In other words, the movements of human-divine communion are already present in God before our petition, intercession, or thanksgiving is offered. We find a "place" which is there for us. In and through prayer, the one praying is swept up into the

49. Fiddes, "Participating in the Trinity," 379–80; Torrance, *Persons in Communion*, 356–62.

50. Fiddes, "Participating in the Trinity," 382.

51. Fiddes, "Quest for Place," 53.

52. Fiddes, "Participating in the Trinity," 382.

53. Fiddes, *Participating in God*, 38. The characterization of the Holy Spirit as "deepening relationships" reflects the Augustinian or Western understanding of the Trinity with its focus on the idea of the Spirit as the concretization of what is shared between the Father and the Son.

54. Ibid., 42.

dynamic, self-donating currents of subsistent relations we identify as "Father," "Son," and "Spirit."[55]

In "Participating in the Trinity" Fiddes' theology of participation broadens out beyond personal salvation to include the whole story of creation and its *telos* in God.[56] Salvation is set within its creation context. Through the wildness of the Holy Spirit's mysterious, yet complex ways, deep beneath the surface of things, the natural world is called to respond to the gracious, loving initiative of the Three-are-One. Because the natural world can indwell the Creator as well as be shaped by the relational movements in which it participates, it is a "semiotic or sign-bearing reality."[57]

Fiddes rightly acknowledges that to say that created beings participate in the Trinity is not to say that everything or everyone participates in the same way. Nor does it mean that there will not be rebellion against God and God's purposes. Some created beings say "yes" to the Father through the Son; others say "no." The difficult issue is how to deal with a created being's "no." To address the challenge of the creature's "no," Fiddes turns to Hans Urs von Balthasar's insight regarding where a creaturely "no" to God could be located.[58]

Since there is nothing outside God and since there has to be a context in which dialogue with God is established in order to say, "no," Balthasar claims there is only one place where the creaturely "no" can be voiced.[59] Ironically, that one place is within the response of the Son to the Father. Just as the creaturely "yes" to God "leans upon the movement of thanksgiving and obedience that is already there in God," so we speak "no" in the same space. The creaturely "no" is a kind of "twisted knot" within the dynamic flow of love of the Son's response.[60] He concludes that the creature's "no" is located within the Son's all-embracing "yes" to the Father, in the Spirit.

According to Balthasar, the Father's initial self-giving of divinity in the giving of the Son leads to a second moment of kenosis: the

55. Ibid.

56. Fiddes, "Participating in the Trinity," 388.

57. Ibid., 388–89. These ideas will be further developed in Fiddes' forthcoming book, *Seeing World and Knowing God*.

58. Fiddes, "Participating in the Trinity," 389.

59. Ibid.

60. Ibid.; cf. von Balthasar, *Theodrama* 4, 330.

Son's willful obedience to the Father, where the Son surrenders himself without reserve in order to save humanity. The great Swiss theologian argues that there is an infinite distance between the Son and the Father through these two kenotic moments in the divine life. While the Father does not cease to be divine, such an infinite self-donation amounts to "a gulf of 'godlessness.'"[61] According to Fiddes, "this distance has room for all the distances between persons that there are within world of finitude, including those of sin."[62] Thus the self-donating God, in all humility, "allows the 'no' to be spoken within the life of the Trinity, and to suffer the pain that this causes."[63]

Reflecting an Irenean understanding of human participation in the economy of salvation, Fiddes argues that an account of participation in God makes clear that the relational movement in God is focused on the eternal Son's response to the Father. Humanity is in need of Christ from the beginning for the fulfillment and perfection of humanity. Christians confess that Jesus of Nazareth's human response to the Father, unlike ours, was "absolutely *identical*" to the eternal, filial movement of obedience response of the Son to the Father.[64] Jesus' "yes" to his Abba Father "was and is exactly and completely the same as the 'yes' within the Trinity."[65] The earthly Son of Man is the eternal, only-begotten Son of the Father.[66] Thus, "the pattern of Christ is mapped so exactly over the patterns of self-giving in God that his ministry, death, and resurrection become the means for all human participation in God."[67] The pattern of self-donation in the life, death, and resurrection of Christ so manifest in the economy of salvation the paternal-filial relationships in God's life that Christ becomes the way for human participation in God. Created beings depend upon the particular flow of the filial-paternal relationship as they indwell the infinite and superabundant communion of the Trinity. "Participating in the Trinity" suggests that human destiny finds fulfillment in being drawn into and indwelling in the ecstatic currents

61. Fiddes, "Participating in the Trinity," 389; cf. Balthasar, *Theodrama* 4, 323–24.
62. Fiddes, "Participating in the Trinity," 389.
63. Ibid.
64. Ibid. Emphasis original.
65. Ibid.
66. Ibid., 390.
67. Ibid.

of divine relations, an indwelling which has absolutely occurred in the Incarnation, where we "behold the glory as of the Only-Begotten for the Father" (John 1:14).

An important concern often raised in Protestant engagements with theosis is the problem of the participation of the created in the uncreated. To address this issue Fiddes draws upon Gregory Palamas' theology of the divine *energia*, but finds problematic the Palamite assertion of an unknowable essence of God behind and beyond revelation. Fiddes contends, in light of his reading of Barth and von Balthasar, that there is no hidden divine essence "behind" the revealed relations. Yet, this does not mean that there is no difference between uncreated and created being. "The difference does not lies in 'two orders of being' which are excluded from one another, and which requires another principle to mediate between them."[68] Rather it lies in relationship: "The uncreated does not relate to the created in the same way as the created to the uncreated, yet they can still share the same relationship."[69] As Fiddes claims: "In humility, the uncreated God allows God's self, by a generous act of divine self-limitation, to be satisfied and even completed in love and joy through relationship with created persons. In humility, human persons receive from God the completion [christologically and eschatologically] that they need by nature."[70] Such a statement stands in some tension with Orthodox theology. On the one hand, he asserts that the inexhaustible, superabundant, fecund life of the mysterious triune God can thus be known apophatically within the complex web of relations in which we participate. In this way, Fiddes would agree with John Zizioulas's argument that theosis (1) centers on "the concept of personhood, not a participation in the energies,"[71] and (2) necessitates that "the personal life which is realized in God should also be realized on the level of human existence."[72] Showing the influence of process metaphysics, Fiddes' assertion, on the other hand, that God allows God's self, by an act of self-limitation, "to be satisfied and even completed"

68. Ibid., 383
69. Ibid.
70. Ibid.
71. Russell, *Fellow Workers*, 139.
72. Zizioulas, *Being as Communion*, 50, quoted in Russell, *Fellow Workers*, 140.

would be found difficult and wanting in light of Orthodoxy's commitment to divine immutability and impassibility.

Theosis expresses a real and intimate relationship with and in God. The way this relationship is experienced and developed in the present is through participation in the ecclesial life of the church. To the ecclesial dimensions of Fiddes' theology of participation I now turn.

Walking Together

In a number of recent essays, Fiddes compares the Orthodox notion of theosis to historical Baptist understandings of soteriology in order to affirm and "reinterpret" the claim that "there is no salvation outside the church."[73] For Fiddes, this aphorism of the early church says, "Salvation is about being part of a renewed human community, sharing in the continuing body of Christ on earth and participating in the communion of the triune God."[74] In particular, he argues for a connection between a Baptist theology of covenant and salvation as participation in the triune life of God.

In a manner similar to Pinnock, Fiddes argues that Baptist theology has too often reduced salvation to a decisive, transactional moment within the individual's experience, which provides immediate salvation, once and for all. Moreover, salvation has largely been treated as a narrowly forensic concept, effectually evacuating it of personal, relational content. This tendency to conceptualize salvation as a single act of being declared in the right with God has resulted in an unnecessary and artificial distinction between justification and sanctification.[75] Justification has largely been regarded as a solitary, individual event in which a person stands alone before God. Sanctification, at best, has been viewed as a corporate experience in ecclesial fellowship; at worst, it has been privatized, reduced to a theological and practical discussion of techniques as to how an individual Christian can work out his or her own salvation.[76]

73. Cf. Fiddes, *Tracks and Traces*, 1–20, 21–47, 48–64, 65–82, 228–48, 249–59; Fiddes, "Church and Salvation," 120–48.

74. Fiddes, "Church and Salvation," 122.

75. Ibid., 139, 141.

76. Ibid., 141.

According to Fiddes, these theological tendencies can be countered because much in earliest Baptist thought regards redemption as a process or journey in and with the body of Christ, the church. The practice of baptism identifies Christian life as "a story of salvation which is more complicated and extensive than conversion alone."[77] Baptism initiates believers into a social reality prior to an individual's response in faith. It is an ingrafting into the body of Christ so that the members of the body may "walk together."[78]

Members of the gathered, covenanted fellowship become one with Christ, and, thus through the agency of the Holy Spirit, communally enjoy his life. Indeed, there is a "deep ontological connection between church and salvation," argues Fiddes, which finds expression in Baptist thought in the affirmation that the salvific relation of Christ to the church is conceived as "the presence and activity of Christ in his household."[79] Christ's mediatorial activity is not merely between God and the individual sinner. Rather, "Christ is mediator in the sense of being the establisher of a covenant between God and the church," creating a community in which persons repent and come to faith in Christ.[80] Hence, covenant language in the earliest Baptist tradition suggests the salvation of the individual person does not occur somewhere outside from, or apart from, but *within* the church.[81] Notions of salvation through divine covenant in Baptist thought and through the divine hypostasis of the Logos in Orthodoxy converge, argues Fiddes, "When the assuming of human nature into the life of God is understood to be the continuous activity of the Christ who is actually *present* here and now in the church."[82]

Fiddes also speaks of salvation as cooperation with God in the church. As Orthodoxy likes to suggest, salvation as theosis involves a synergy of divine grace and human free will. While Orthodoxy understands this interaction of grace and free will christologically (as the union of two natures which is also two wills), it is in the church, argues

77. Ibid., 142.
78. Fiddes, *Tracks and Traces*, 233.
79. Fiddes, "Church and Salvation," 126.
80. Ibid., 128.
81. Ibid., 127.
82. Ibid.

Fiddes, that the synergy of wills "has the greatest scope to operate."[83] On this account theosis "has some affinity" with a theology of covenant present among the seventeenth-century British Baptists. Bringing together the notion of covenant in such seventeenth-century Baptist thinkers as John Smyth and Benjamin Keach with Barth's understanding of covenant and election, Fiddes contends this cooperation of divine grace and human will only makes sense in the context of the ecclesial community. To understand this claim, he recalls that for the seventeenth-century Baptists, the term "covenant" had a threefold meaning. First, it referred to an eternal covenant of grace of God which effects salvation. In light of this first understanding, one can affirm a covenant in God's own trinitarian life, between the Father and the Son in the love of the Spirit. Third, the term "covenant" refers to the act of consent among persons gathered together in a particular locale to be a church.[84] Although he is not very clear on how the eternal covenant decrees of God and the mutual agreement among the ecclesial community interact, he claims that "God's making of covenant *with* the church is simultaneous with the making of covenant *by* the church."[85] To be incorporated into Christ's body, we participate not only in God's covenant with us, but in the inner covenant-making in God.[86] We are thus gifted, by the covenant-making God, with the capacity and responsibility to act as agents in the ecclesial community. Living graced lives, we who belong to God in Christ act both by his power and by our own, for he "heals and elevates our own capacities."[87]

Douglas Harink: Theosis, Virtues, and Transfiguration

Of the four Baptist theologians surveyed in this chapter, Douglas Harink (b. 1953), a Canadian Baptist and Professor of Theology at King's University College of Alberta, most directly engages the historical and theological issues related to the concept of theosis. In his commentary on 1 and 2 Peter for the Brazos Theological Commentary on the Bible Series, Harink offers an interesting and likely controversial hermeneu-

83. Ibid., 144.
84. Ibid.
85. Ibid., 147. Emphasis original.
86. Fiddes, *Tracks and Traces*, 79.
87. Tanner, *Jesus, Humanity and Trinity*, 58.

tical argument for reading 2 Peter.[88] He identifies participation in the divine nature, the transfiguration of Christ, and apocalyptic transformation of the world as key themes of the small epistle. These themes are also prominent within Eastern Orthodox theology. In light of the connection between Orthodox theology and 2 Peter, Harink argues that one must read 2 Peter in light of the Orthodox tradition, not the other way round. The reason for this is that "the atmosphere" of 2 Peter, so different from not only 1 Peter but the rest of the New Testament, is one not frequently breathed by Western (Protestant) Christians readers that it is difficult to get a handle on its key themes.[89] However, when situated within the theological context of the Orthodox tradition the "intellectual and spiritual riches" of 2 Peter can be explored and understood.[90]

Sharing the Divine Nature

For Harink, the theological center of gravity of the epistle's message is 1:3–18. The passage emphasizes God's gift and call; claims that we can become "sharers of the divine nature"; lists virtues of the Christian life; and offers an interpretation of Jesus' transfiguration. While the overarching purpose of the 2 Peter 1 is to tutor the saints to stand firm in the faith against the arguments of false teachers, the initial step by the writer is to remind the readers of what they have already been given and promised by God in Jesus Christ, and for what they have been called and chosen as the people of God.[91]

Peter begins by grounding the Christian life in the divine power and calling in Jesus Christ. The power to live the Christian life is not dependent upon human power, but on Jesus Christ and his gifts. Peter makes the radical claim that Christians can become "sharers in the divine nature." For Harink to share in the divine nature is to participate fully, personally, and bodily in the divine glory and eternity of Jesus Christ.[92] It is the final destiny of the Christian life.

88. It is beyond the scope of this essay to consider the questions about the relationship between canon and tradition raised by Harink's argument for reading 2 Peter.

89. Harink, *1 & 2 Peter*, 21.

90. Ibid., 22.

91. Ibid., 137.

92. Ibid., 140.

Harink engages ancient and contemporary sources in order to understand the meaning of this unique phrase in an obscure letter of the New Testament, which has become a text of great importance for the Orthodox doctrine of theosis. He rightly notes that the language of human beings becoming "a god" is fraught with danger and misunderstanding. It can be confusing language that borders on idolatry. "Sharers of the divine nature" does not mean that human beings become divine by any potential in human nature. Neither does it mean that human nature can somehow become absorbed into or identified with the divine nature. Wanting to avoid pantheistic overtones, Harink draws a clear ontological distinction between Creator and creature: the uncreated God is divine by nature whereas created human nature has been given or gifted with the glory of the divine nature by grace. He identifies his concerns by appealing to a classic statement on theosis by Maximus the Confessor from *Ad Thalassium* 22. While Maximus affirms that theosis is deification by divine grace, guarding against thinking that the deification of human nature involves being given an "identity of essence with God," Harink suggests that any meaningful sense of human creatureliness gets lost in Maximus. If finally in theosis human beings, as Maximus says, "'Have fully transcended the principles of being created out of nothing,' does creatureliness itself remain? Or are human beings endowed (by grace, to be sure), beyond creatureliness, with the uncreated divine nature?"[93] Even when Maximus or Gregory of Palamas or contemporary Orthodox theologians affirm that human beings become "uncreated" or "eternal" not by their own effort but by divine grace, they seem to blur the distinction between the uncreated and the creature, "insofar as glorified human beings *become* 'eternal' or 'uncreated.'"[94]

Harink's expressed concern reveals the ambivalence that can cloud the discourse surrounding the concept of theosis, and shows why many Protestants are at pains to clarify how they understand it. He would affirm, I believe, Veli-Matti Kärkkäinen's assertion that "human theosis, even though real, is a relative rather than an absolute transformation."[95] Theosis involves a real and genuine divine-human union, but there is no literal fusion or confusion in which the integrity of divine nature or

93. Ibid., 143.

94. Ibid. Emphasis original.

95. Kärkkäinen, *One with God*, 31.

human nature is compromised. "Sharing in the divine nature" identifies the divine-human relationship as characterized by intimacy and differentiation, but not consubstantiality.

In an effort to move toward conceptual clarity, Harink identifies five criteria for a definition of theosis: it must be "governed by (1) biblical teaching and orthodox doctrine regarding the triune God, (2) the uncompromised ontological distinction of creator and creature, (3) humankind as created in the image and likeness of God, (4) union with Christ, and (5) the life-giving presence and power of the Holy Spirit."[96] Interestingly, Harink does not offer his own definition. Instead, he appeals to Kärkkäinen's definition: "*Theosis* is the mystery of human nature's perfection in Christ, not its alteration or destruction, because *theosis* is the mystery of eternal life in communion with God in the divine Logos."[97] Harink is drawn to this definition, in my estimation, because it emphasizes that deification means that human beings are "supernaturally" elevated to or participate in God. This definition does not speak of human beings "becoming" divine, but rather stresses the "perfection" of human nature in Christ. Kärkkäinen's definition thus emphasizes the sense of creatureliness Harink desires and yet finds lacking in Maximus the Confessor.

Moreover, Harink finds Kärkkäinen's definition helpful because it clarifies the meaning of theosis christologically and pneumatologically. First, a christological clarification: "Only the Son of God is divine by very nature."[98] Offering this clarification Harink draws heavily upon Lutheran theologian Robert Jenson. Because God himself, in the person of Christ, shared fully in our humanity, human beings are able to "share" in God. What is ours he has assumed fully; what is his can fully become ours. What Christ becomes, according to Jenson, is a fallen, flawed human being, condemned to death. Human beings become what he is, humanity so united with God so as to receive and bear the divine. In becoming one of us, Christ heals and redeems human nature. Yet, human beings do not become "additional God-humans." Rather, human beings become participants in Christ, "members of the *totus Christus*;

96. Harink, *1 & 2 Peter*, 143.

97. Kärkkäinen, *One with God*, 25, quoted in Harink, *1 & 2 Peter*, 143–44.

98. Harink, *1 & 2 Peter*, 144.

they are God-bearers communally and not otherwise."[99] In light of Jenson, Harink says that "sharing in the divine nature" occurs because "our human nature is purified and taken up, through our participation in Christ's humanity (and through his in ours), into the divine life and fulfilled *in its humanity*, through that participation."[100] In other words, deification is christification: there is a christological structure to the human being and the destiny of humanity is to be found union in Christ.

A pneumatological clarification is: Christians share in Christ's divine sonship only through the grace and power of the Holy Spirit. The Spirit deifies human beings, makes them holy through conformity to Christ. The story of the Son's incarnation, death, and resurrection narrates the restoration to human nature of its capacity for imaging the divine likeness by living in relationship with God; the activity of the Spirit applies this healing to humanity. "What Christ has accomplished universally, the Spirit perfects particularly."[101] Thus, the Son does not redeem human beings without the Spirit's work of ingrafting them into the triune life. Without the abiding presence of the Spirit, we cannot begin to follow Christ. Through the indwelling of the Spirit, human persons become partakers of the divine nature. As Cyril of Alexandria said, "We are transformed into the divine image, into Christ Jesus, . . . by partaking of the Holy Spirit."[102] The Spirit forms, seals, and transfigures the human being so the human being can conform to the visible image of the invisible God (Col 1:15). The Spirit empowers human beings ceaselessly and causelessly to glorify, celebrate, rejoice in God. The Spirit beckons human beings to "Come," to desire the beautiful mystery of God's trinitarian life; to be overwhelmed by the grace and goodness of God so as to desire to share in God's excessive, superabundant life of love, which God desires to share with human beings.

Harink furthers his argument by claiming that the locus of "sharing in the divine nature" in 2 Pet 1 is the church, especially the sacramental life of the church. Deification is personal *and* ecclesial. The people of God are "God-bearers communually, not otherwise."[103] Clothing our-

99. Jenson, *Systematic Theology*, 2:341, quoted in Harink, *1 & 2 Peter*, 144.

100. Harink, *1 & 2 Peter*, 144. Emphasis original.

101. Winslow, *Dynamics of Salvation*, 129.

102. Cyril of Alexandria, *De recta fide ad Theodosius* 36 as translated by Lampe, *Seal of Spirit*, 257, quoted in Rogers, *After Spirit*, 155.

103. Jenson, *Systematic Theology*, 2:341, quoted in Harink, *1 & 2 Peter*, 144.

selves in Christ through the agency of the Spirit is initiated by washing and bathing in the waters of the baptismal font. Our transformation brought about by participation in the new creation through baptism is confirmed and strengthened by our sharing the abundant gifts of Jesus and his food at the table of thanksgiving. It is through "baptismal and eucharistic incorporation into the body of Christ, the church," that the people of God have their creaturely humanity united to his.[104] Thus the sacraments are the physical steps of the ladder of ascent to union with the triune life.

Virtue and Theosis

Beyond the theological considerations of Pinnock, Grenz, and Fiddes, Harink, in his reading of 2 Pet 1:5–7, explores the moral significance of "sharing in the divine nature." To become sons and daughters of God through divine grace and participation in Christ evokes from us, says the epistle writer, a vigorous effort toward a virtuous life of living into the destiny Christ has already given. Striving toward a godly life is not a personal achievement, "but the power and promise of Christ at work in the believers and the church."[105] In language that relates the aesthetic to the moral, Harink says, it is "the sheer *attractive and compelling beauty, glory, and authority of Christ's own being and life* that comes to us, calls us, draws us irresistibly to him, and elicits from us a corresponding life of godliness and excellence."[106] Peter identifies faith, goodness, knowledge, self-control, patience, godliness, mutual affection, and love as virtues of the Christian life. According to Harink, such virtues are the practices and dispositions by which members of the body of Christ are incorporated, through divine power, into the saving knowledge of Jesus Christ, "freed from the corruption of the world, transformed by the power of Christ's glory, and made to share in his incorruptibility and immorality."[107] Striving after the virtues increasingly conforms our life in the world to the life of Jesus Christ and frees believers and the church to live into and out of the baptismal vocation of personal and ecclesial righteousness. The *telos* of the virtues is not self-improvement

104. Harink, *1 & 2 Peter*, 144.

105. Ibid., 147.

106. Ibid., 138. Emphasis original.

107. Ibid., 150.

but life in the new creation.[108] Presently living the virtues is a process of conforming to the full virtue of existence in the eternal kingdom of God, as well as an apocalyptic sign of the invading and inbreaking of the God's cosmic and moral order in an old, corrupt one.[109]

Jesus' Transfiguration and Our Transfiguration

Our eschatological glimpse of the fullness of such a godly life is seen in the transfiguration of Jesus Christ. In fact, Harink identifies Jesus' transfiguration as an apocalypse, a heavenly revelation of the coming "eternal kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ" (2 Pet 1:11).[110] The transfiguration of Jesus is central to Orthodox theology, worship, iconography, and mysticism. By exploring the importance of the transfiguration in 2 Peter in relation to anthropology, soteriology, and ecclesiology, Harink wades into Orthodox waters in a way Pinnock, Grenz, and Fiddes do not. With some comparative attention to the transfiguration account of the evangelists, his chief theological concern is the significance of Peter's singular theological focus on the Jesus' transfiguration to the exclusion of the Jesus' death and resurrection.

2 Peter is attempting to convince its reader, says Harink, that the Day of the Lord is coming. The reality of this day of final judgment and fulfillment of new creation is tied to the transfigured flesh of Jesus Christ. The transfiguration of Jesus, according to Harink, is a temporal glimpse of the eternal divine reality of Christ's kingdom and life of the world to come. As an apocalyptic event, it calls believers to enter into that kingdom and begin to experience its promise, power, and glory. It unveils the final destiny of person in Christ, indeed the whole of creation, involving a radical and qualitative change in the very character of existence rather than a move to a different realm or space (1 Pet 1:4, 11; 3:13).[111] The whole realm of broken creation is not destroyed. Rather, it is transfigured. The transfiguration on Mt. Tabor reveals in shards of

108. Ibid., 147. Harink says, "to speak of moral effort 'ratifying' or 'guaranteeing' salvation seems to run against the grain of Peter's emphasis on personal moral *participation* in Christ's prior reality and work. 'Confirm' seems right—living the virtues is our wholehearted yes to Christ, 'incited' by the grace of Christ" (ibid., 151–52, footnote 42; emphasis original).

109. Ibid., 150–52.

110. Ibid., 155.

111. Ibid., 147.

radiant light the final truth and reality of human theosis. It is a vision, a revelation, of the true character of human nature.

The apocalyptic Christology and political eschatology of 2 Peter, focused in the transfiguration of Jesus, calls for human moral action. Employing the language of ascent, which echoes the thought of Origen as well as expresses Maximus the Confessor's insight that the radiant light of the transfigured Christ implies a change in those who seek spiritual knowledge, Harink brings together theosis, virtuous living, and transfiguration in a mystical-political fashion. As we ascend the rugged path to the holy place on the mountain we discover that each step is made possible by the power of Jesus Christ. We ascend with Christ and in Christ in order to experience at the summit a transformative vision of God. In a manner which resonates with Orthodox thinking, Harink suggests that the full meaning of the transfigured Christ is made known in light of Christ's death and resurrection.[112] The glory of the transfiguration is only attained through sharing in the *kenosis* of Christ. In striving to live virtuously we already share in the divine life of Jesus Christ, who himself is "the excellence and strength of our own striving in the ascent of faith."[113] As we ascend the mountain of Jesus' transfiguration we find that our own lives are already being transfigured through conformity to the life, passion, and glory of Christ. Living into holiness and godliness, personally and ecclesially, is a sign of the coming new creation in the transfigured, crucified, risen Christ. The transforming apocalypse of Jesus is thus not only a future hope but a present experience, the dawning of the Eighth Day in this present life. While we do wait for its coming in fullness, we hasten its final arrival by giving ourselves, in the Spirit, to Christ's own mode of living: self-donating love. In so doing we "know in some measure, here and now, . . . the reality . . . of our sharing in the divine nature."[114]

The Significance of Baptist Theologians Appropriating Theosis and Orthodoxy

Theosis seems to be rather ubiquitous in contemporary theology. For Orthodoxy, humanity's eschatological destiny is participation in the life

112. Ibid., 158, 161, 186.

113. Ibid., 161.

114. Ibid., 162 (see 161–62, 178–79).

of Christ through the Spirit, realized progressively within the life of the believer in time through "life of ecclesial communion and moral striving" in and with the church.[115] As God freely shares the divine life with believers at the divine initiative, believers can freely indwell the divine life and are thereby deified. By grace they become partakers of the divine nature. This central doctrinal teaching of Orthodoxy, which functions perichoretically in Orthodox theology (in the sense that theosis "interpenetrates" all doctrinal loci), has been gaining increased attention in Catholic and Protestant theologies. To the surprise of many, theosis has gained currency among evangelical and Free Church theologies.[116] As Alan Neder assesses, "The cumulative result of scholarly engagement with [theosis] is an emerging consensus that the *Christian* understanding of salvation, whatever else it may involve and however it may be construed, somehow involves participation in God's being."[117]

The emerging consensus on the theme of theosis in contemporary theology which Neder points to, of course, does not belie the teaching's diversity of meaning across the various traditions. In fact, the fluidity of the term points to it "roominess," which invites Christians outside the Orthodox tradition to learn from Orthodox theology and teaching, and also to explore the extent to which modes of thought within a tradition might agree with and draw upon Orthodox thought.[118] Thus, what do Pinnock's, Grenz's, Fiddes', and Harink's thematic engagements with theosis say about how Baptists can rethink soteriology? How does testing the implications of understanding salvation as human participation in God's being occasion exploration and clarification of other doctrines and teachings? What are the points of agreement between our four Baptist theologians and Orthodoxy? What are the points of disagreement? As these questions are entertained, I will also offer critical assessments of our four Baptist theologians.

115. Russell, *Fellow Workers*, 21.

116. See, Clendenin, "Partakers of Divinity," 365–79; Rakestraw, "Becoming Like God," 257–69; Finger, "Anabaptism and Eastern Orthodoxy," 67–91.

117. Neder, *Participation in Christ*, 87. Emphasis original.

118. Ibid., 88.

Toward a Catholic Theology

The fact that Pinnock, Grenz, Fiddes, and Harink dialogue with Orthodox theology suggests the promise of a Baptist way of theology that is "catholic" and "evangelical." Of course, these four theologians are not alone in pointing toward such a hope. One can identify James Wm. McClendon Jr., Barry Harvey, Curtis Freeman, Steve Harmon, Philip Thompson, and Beth Newman as Baptist theologians who are "catholic" and "evangelical" in their respective theological writings. Yet, what do I mean by the promise of a Baptist way of theology that is "catholic" and "evangelical"? I mean a theology which engages the whole of the Christian tradition, in its diversity and richness. At one level, this suggests that a contemporary Baptist way of theology is "authentically Christian and ecclesial when it is contiguous with the prior theological tradition." At another level, it implies an ecumenical conviction: "Theology which is to be heeded is not simply the theology of the church to which a particular writer belongs, but the theology of all Christians."[119] In other words, a Baptist way of theology must practice the discipline of *ressourcement*, a return to the sources. Indeed, as Fiddes has indicated, Baptists must not only return to the sources of the early church but also revisit anew their seventeenth-century sources to renew a theological vision. Doing so provides a theological wellspring for challenging a certain theological provincialism, crude *sola scriptura* Biblicism, and a radical individualistic anthropocentrism that has especially haunted Baptist theology in North America for the past two centuries.

Union with God

All four Baptist theologians appropriate theosis in order to develop an understanding of the terms "union with God" or "participation in God." For all four theologians salvation means communion with the Father through a participation in the Son that is the gift of the Spirit. In particular, participation has increasingly become a prominent theme in Fiddes theology, affecting all areas of his theology, and is worked out in a fully trinitarian context.

Our four Baptist theologians and Orthodoxy agree that the union of God and human beings is a real and differentiated union. An un-

119. Buckley and Yeago, "Introduction," 3.

derstanding of participation that draws on the Apostle Paul's teaching of the believer's participatory union with Christ is a strong feature of our four Baptist theologians' engagement with theosis. Being "in Christ" through the agency of the Holy Spirit, believers acquire a new identity which empowers them to live with and in conformity to the life of Christ, sharing in his cruciformity so that the body of Christ may come to share in Christ's glory. This mystical participation in Christ makes it possible for believers, as Fiddes says, to be caught up in the loving and fecund relational currents of the triune life so as to exclaim with Christ, "Abba, Father!" (cf. Rom 8:15).[120] However, participation in the divine life, initiated in baptism and continued and perfected in the Eucharist, does not mean our absorption or dissolution into the divine life. In concert with Orthodoxy, our four Baptist theologians affirm that theosis commends the creaturely, differentiated integrity of human beings in salvation.

As evinced earlier, at some point in their respective engagement with theosis, all four Baptist theologians address the question of whether theosis compromises the uncreated-created distinction. The context out of which they attend to this question is a Protestant concern that the language of "participation in God" or "union with God," in some way, collapses the Creator-creature distinction. All four Baptist theologians affirm, as does Orthodoxy, that human theosis is by divine grace. In other words, Pinnock, Grenz, Fiddes, and Harink affirm a natural (ontological) dependence of our created being on God. Having no existence without its source, our created being is distinct from the uncreated being of God. However, human sharing in the divine nature is accomplished, supernaturally, in the mystery of Christ in the power of the Holy Spirit. Through sharing fully in humanity (and healing humanity's nature distorted and twisted by sin), Christ's own loving communion with the Father in the gift of the Spirit makes possible our sharing in the divine nature. Pinnock, Grenz, Fiddes, and Harink respectively assert that we can only share in the divine nature through the experience of participation in a living communion with Christ in his body, the church. The result of the triune God's ecstatic movement toward us and our own

120. Fiddes, *Participating in God*, 34–46.

ecstatic response to the Three-are-One, is our theosis, "our coming to exist in the mode of God without identity of essence."[121]

Widely (although not universally) held within Orthodoxy is the distinction between divine essence and energies. Pinnock, Grenz, and Harink do not consider this distinction; Fiddes does engage the distinction. In one sense, his affirmation of Barth's understanding of event is an affirmation of something analogous to the essence-energy distinction. According to Barth, God's sovereign and gracious action distinguishes God from that which is other than God. God's action is God's action alone. "God does not share it. God's being is in-act, and God's act is sovereign and gracious."[122] However, God freely shares Godself with us in God's act. God does so by including humanity in this action of God and therefore in Godself. In the event of the union of God's sovereign and free action, and our response to God's action, we are given a creaturely share in God's being.[123] In his "yes" to Barth theology of event, Fiddes agrees with Orthodoxy that God's nature is "imparticible," even as human beings really participate in God.

Yet, a point of contention between Fiddes and Orthodoxy must be acknowledged. As noted earlier, he builds upon the Palamite understanding of the essence-energy distinction, yet finds the distinction problematic: there cannot be an unknowable essence of God behind and beyond revelation. He argues there is no hidden divine essence "behind" the revealed relations of the triune God. He does not deny a difference between uncreated and created being. In a manner that reflects the influence of process metaphysics, he claims the difference does not lie in "two orders of being," but in relationship, even asserting that somehow God's self is "satisfied" and "completed" through relationships with created persons.[124] Therefore, on this point of comparison, Fiddes' and Orthodoxy's respective doctrines of God yield differences in understanding of the meaning of human participation in God's being.

An issue that warrants future exploration as to how a Baptist understanding of participation in God compares with Orthodoxy is the importance of the sacraments. The sacraments often figure centrally

121. Russell, *Fellow Workers*, 125.

122. Neder, *Participation in Christ*, 90.

123. Ibid., 91.

124. Cf. Fiddes, "Participating in the Trinity," 383.

in Orthodox discussions of theosis, but that is not the case with our four Baptist theologians' understanding of human participation in God. While Pinnock, Grenz, Fiddes, and Harink, in general, identify the sacraments of baptism and the Eucharist as practices which enable believers to ascend the ladder toward union with God, in their respective soteriological, ecclesiological, and pneumatological reflections the sacraments do not bear the same heavy theological load as in Orthodoxy. However, not known for a sacramental theology, our four Baptist theologians, to varying degrees, have a sacramental understanding of God's action in the church and world.[125] Whereas I would venture there is greater agreement than disagreement, how Baptists (with a sacramental perspective) and Orthodoxy understand sacramental meditation is a question that ought to be tackled.

The Possibility of the Transfiguration for Christology

While Harink does not explore the christological dimensions of transfiguration, his attention to this key, but often overlooked, event in the Gospel narratives has possibilities to greatly enrich Baptist reflections on Christology. Baptist theologians typically concentrate christological reflections on the ministry and teaching, as well as the passion and the cross of Jesus, and, to a lesser degree, his resurrection. Significant attention to the transfiguration (as well as the ascension) by Baptist theologians has the possibilities of leading to a more robust incarnational Christology. Also, attention to the transfiguration of Jesus can possibly give a greater and fuller accent to the apocalyptic nature of God's gospel in christological construction. Lastly, engaging the transfiguration of Jesus can facilitate a greater dialogue with the Christology of the patristic era in general and the Eastern tradition in particular.

Anthropology and Participation in God

On several points there is agreement between our four Baptist theologians and Orthodoxy regarding the anthropological dimensions of participation in God. First of all, Pinnock, Grenz, Fiddes, and Harink as

125. On the recovery and reconstruction of a sacramentalism in a Baptist modality, see the essays in Cross and Thompson, *Baptist Sacramentalism* and *Baptist Sacramentalism 2*. Pinnock and Grenz contributed to *Baptist Sacramentalism*, while Fiddes contributed essays to both volumes.

well as Orthodoxy conceive of participation in God teleologically and eschatologically. Theosis is the purpose of anthropology and the *telos* toward which all creation strives. Secondly, both Orthodoxy and our four Baptist theologians conceive of the anthropological dimensions of participation in God christologically. Reflecting their Reformation and pietistic heritages, Pinnock, Grenz, Fiddes, and Harink speak, in various ways, of the Pauline notion of the "objective participation of all humanity in Christ as fulfilled in the believers' subjective participation in Christ."[126] They attempt to bring Paul's teaching of the believer being "in Christ" into conversation with the Orthodox emphasis on the gradual teleological orientation of Christian life, which reaches its completion and perfection in God's eschatological age to come. Doing so results in a "Christological-conditioned anthropology," wherein humanity finds fullness and completion in Christ, in whom God and humanity are reconciled and fully united.[127] Indeed, it is fair to say that for our four Baptist theologians and Orthodoxy it is not Christ that fits into some anthropology but we who are placed into Christ.

Third, our four Baptist theologians also agree with Orthodoxy that theosis is not the abolition of true humanity, but its realization. Human beings are created good, oriented toward union with God. God created humanity not only for relationship with God and with other creatures and creation. To live in loving, ecstatic communion with God and one another is natural. As Pinnock claims, "We are structured in such a way as to be able to respond to [God]."[128] Sin is, however, a perversion, not a destruction, of our nature. If we are created to befriend God as well as other creatures, then sin is a fundamental denial of our created relatedness. It is a twisting of humanity's constitutive relation to God, to other persons, and to creation that renders us confused about, if not ignorant of, the very goods and end of our existence. If in our created being we are to share life with God, other persons, and creation, then sin is "unnatural."

126. Neder, *Participation in God*, 90.

127. Cf. Billings, "John Milbank's Theology," 96.

128. Pinnock, *Flame of Love*, 160.

Walking Together: Salvation and the Church

Perhaps the most important signal sent by Pinnock, Grenz, Fiddes, and Harink's appropriation of theosis is the need for Baptist theology to reconsider issues of soteriology. A convergence of Pietistic as well as Puritan-Separatist heritage and the influence of eighteenth- and nineteenth-century revivalism lead Baptists in America, especially the American South, to view salvation as less a process or journey and more as a transactional, immediate, punctiliar, voluntary, individual moment of conversion. The negative effect of this historical occurrence has resulted in two points previously identified: (1) an overemphasis on justification, understood as a forensic remedying of the defective human state through the death of Christ, and (2) an increasing divide between justification and sanctification. In addition, salvation was located in the solitary self, whose traumatic conversion experience alone could attest to the efficacy of Christ's work.

Pinnock, Grenz, Fiddes, and Harink's engagement with and use of theosis presents an opportunity for Baptist theologians to correct these deficiencies and liabilities in soteriological matters. Engagement with the Orthodox understanding of theosis challenges the insistence upon the dominance of justification (and personal conversion) which has engendered a certain abstraction of the work of Jesus Christ from his person, isolating the paschal events from the person who is at their center. In effect, this threatens a drift into a functionalist Christology in which Christ's person is a mere function of his saving activity.[129] The incarnational emphasis of theosis resists a Baptist theological tendency to allow the motif of justification to become so inflated that it bears the whole weight of Christ's work of reconciliation. Instead, the robust and dynamic character of salvation conveyed by theosis facilitates an integration of justification into "the wider sweep of the saving economy of God, which stretches from eternity to eternity."[130] Emphasizing salvation as a journey, a story, a becoming of the perfection for which humanity was intended, challenges the propensity, to borrow Reformation language, to reduce *sola fide* to an absolute moment thereby drastically foreshortening the life of Christian holiness.[131]

129. Cf. Webster, *Holiness*, 82.

130. Ibid.

131. Ibid., 88.

Of our four Baptist theologians, Pinnock and Fiddes directly attempt to correct an overemphasis on justification; in their engagement with theosis, Grenz and Harink do not make a reconsideration of the relationship of justification (and sanctification) in soteriology a key issue.[132] It can be argued that all four Baptist theologians would differentiate justification and sanctification as two dimensions of union with Christ—the former fully realized and the latter only partially completed. To borrow the language of Calvin, justification and sanctification for Pinnock, Grenz, Fiddes, and Harink are inseparable, being a "double grace" (*duplex gratia*) that is held together in the person of Christ. They would affirm the Geneva theologians' statement that "as Christ cannot be torn into parts, so these two which we perceive in him together and conjointly are inseparable—namely, righteousness and sanctification. Whomever, therefore, God receives into grace, on them he at the same time bestows the Spirit of adoption, by whose power he remakes them into his own image."[133]

Thirdly, in dialogue with the concept of deification, Grenz's reflections on the ecclesial self, Fiddes' retrieval of a Baptist theology of covenant for a revised soteriology, and Harink's theo-political-apocalyptic interpretation of theosis in the context of his reading of 2 Peter present a soteriology ecclesially understood. Grenz, Fiddes, and Harink would likely agree with John Zizioulas: "The goal of salvation is that the personal life which is realized in God should also be realized on the level of human existence." From this Zizioulas concludes, "Salvation is identified with the realization of personhood."[134] The process of this realization occurs as human beings participate, through the Spirit, in the glorious relationship between the Son and the Father. To this end, the Spirit unites us as one body in Jesus Christ. Being saved means being "in Christ" and hence participating in a relational, ecclesial reality.

132. In his *Theology for Community*, Grenz prefers to use the term "conversion" for "justification." He argues that conversion and sanctification are inseparable aspects of the saving work of the Holy Spirit; "glorification" is his term for salvation's eschatological completion or perfection, the *telos* of conversion and sanctification. Cf. Grenz, *Theology for Community*, 405–60. Doug Harink directly engages the debate of justification within the "new perspectives" in Pauline scholarship in light of the "postliberal" theology (his term) of Karl Barth, John Howard Yoder, and Stanley Hauerwas. Cf. Harink, *Paul Among Postliberals*.

133. Calvin, *Institutes*, 3:11:6, as quoted in Billings, "John Milbank's Theology," 90.

134. Zizioulas, *Being as Communion*, 50.

The concept of theosis reminds us that we increasingly learn to be what we have become, participants in God's own life, as we participate in the body of Christ, the church. Salvation is not "the rescue of isolated souls to fellowship with God," but becoming the people of God.[135] Hence, becoming complete in our humanity, or to be "saved," is to participate in the life of God by participating in the life and worship of the Christian ecclesial community. So, how do Pinnock, Grenz, Fiddes, and Harink address participation in God in relation to visible, corporate practices of the church?

The difficulty with Grenz's reflection on the ecclesial self is its abstract and formal character. While a person may read Grenz affirmatively, she will likely ask, "What is the particular, concrete character of ecclesial selfhood?" In the end, Grenz does not consider how corporate, ecclesial practices shape ecclesial selfhood. His untimely death, however, will require others to explore this ecclesiological path of his "incomplete" constructive theology.

Reflecting his charismatic perspective, Pinnock gives specific attention to the practice of water baptism and its association with Spirit baptism, via the Apostle Paul's understanding of baptism "into Christ." Pinnock claims that "baptism in the Spirit, which is sacramentally symbolized in water baptism, gets worked out over a lifetime, whether it begins in infancy or later life . . . Renewal is not accomplished suddenly but progressively—'from glory to glory' (see 2 Cor 3:8) . . . it takes time to learn how to ride the wind of the Spirit and to appropriate all of the rich promise of baptism."[136] The problem is that this brief comment about baptism in relation to participation in God is abstract and ideal. Pinnock does not develop in what sense baptism is an embodied and visible corporate practice of participation in God.

Fiddes speaks of Christ as the comprehensive space in which we have access to the depth of the riches of the divine life. "Christ is the 'place' which enables our participation in God."[137] Yet, how are we "placed" in Christ and thereby participate in the divine life? What is underdeveloped in Fiddes' theology of participation is the pneumatological dimension of being "placed" in Christ. This pneumatological

135. Migliore, *Faith Seeking Understanding*, 157.

136. Pinnock, *Flame of Love*, 168.

137. Fiddes, "Hiddenness of God," 60.

deficiency is also coordinated with an unevenness regarding how our participating in God is inseparable from the practices of the ecclesial community. In his essay "The Church as a Eucharistic Community: A Baptist Contribution," Fiddes draws upon Calvin's Eucharistic theology to argue for a Baptist sacramental perspective which emphasizes participation in God through the body of Christ by means of the eating and drinking at Christ's table.[138] In *Participation in God*, he identifies the Eucharist (and baptism) as a "door" "into the dance of perichoresis in God" and as a sign "which enable us to participate in the drama of death and resurrection which is happening in the heart of God."[139] What does he exactly mean by sacramental participation in God? To address this question Fiddes appeals to Sallie McFague's panentheistic idea of the world as God's body.[140] At the point of a panentheistic conception of the doctrine of God, Fiddes and Orthodoxy radically diverge.[141] In the end, his discussion of the Eucharist and participation in God is largely formal and lacks concreteness as to the matter of "how."

Fiddes merely gestures toward an explicit connection between baptism and participation. In his essay "Baptism and Creation," he explores several primal images of water in order to offer a brief theological sketch of how in baptism a person becomes involved in a deeper and new relationship between the individual and the covenanted community of believers, as well as the matrix of relationships that God weaves in the whole of creation.[142] Like Pinnock, Fiddes does not fully consider

138. Fiddes, "Church as Eucharistic Community," 157–92, especially, 163–66.

139. Fiddes, *Participation in God*, 281.

140. Ibid., 285–96. Cf. McFague, *The Body of God*.

141. The "openness of God" theology advocated by Pinnock is a panentheistic doctrine of God. Orthodoxy would radically differ with Pinnock on such a theology of God.

142. Fiddes, "Baptism and Creation," 107–24. This essay is chiefly concerned to survey five water-images that identify the range of human experiences "through which God enters into relationship with us in life—experiences of new beginnings, cleansing, conflict, crossing boundaries, and refreshment of spirit"—in order to enable Baptists to see baptism as the focus of God's creative-redemptive purposes ibid., 120, 121). A second essay on baptism in *Tracks and Traces*, "Believers' Baptism: An Act of Inclusion or Exclusion?" 125–56, argues for understanding baptism as an inclusive process of initiation as related to four groups of people whom the practice of believers' baptism often excluded: "(a) half-believers, or those who may be on the way to faith, of whatever age; (b) believing children; (c) members of churches which practice infant baptism; (d) people either with learning disabilities or a mental illness" (ibid., 126).

how baptism is an embodied and visible corporate practice of participation in God.

One last critical comment on Fiddes' theology of participation and the neglect of ecclesial practices for developing what participation means. A chapter in *Participating in God* is devoted to divine and human forgiveness. It would seem that his ontological and epistemological argument which hinges on doxological and semantic notion of participation would explore the importance of confession, assurance, and pardon within the liturgy for understanding how we may participate in the rhythm of God's forgiveness, and hence, incarnate the forgiveness of God as a way of life. Disappointingly, such is not the case. In the end, like Pinnock, Fiddes consideration of the practices of Eucharist, baptism, and prayer are ideal and abstract.

Harink arguably offers the most robust and defined vision of ecclesial soteriology. Two points help sustain this claims. First of all, of our four Baptist theologians, he offers sustained reflections on living a virtuous life as envisioned by 2 Pet 1:5–7 (as well as by 1 Peter). Such a vision of transfigured moral life, understood personally and ecclesially, is an elaboration on his theological commentary on the phrase "sharing in the divine nature" in 2 Pet 1:4. His discussion of 2 Pet 3's comments on Jesus' transfiguration aids in imagining the eschatological and teleological dimensions of human theosis. Second, I would suggest that his commentary on 1 and 2 Peter is an extended reflection on baptism and the baptismal life. In other words, Harink's commentary on Peter's message of God's world-transforming apocalypse in Jesus Christ as witnessed to by those who live as "exiles of the Diaspora" is a theological and moral meditation on our participation in the new creation initiated in the waters of baptismal pool, and how our continued and transformed existence is an act of remembering the ecclesial act of our baptism in the ordinariness of daily living.

For Harink, participation in God is "the embodied sanctification of a church as God makes it holy."[143] His trinitarian vision of the church as living God's life as the body of Christ in the agency of the Spirit shows that precisely as the visible community in the world, the church's participation in God's life is embodied. Whether through the practices of baptism and the Eucharist, or the practices of discernment

143. Owens, *Shape of Participation*, 16.

and truthfulness (2 Pet 2), the gathered community of Jesus' disciples faithfully rehearse and perform the story of God's gospel apocalypsed in Christ. The name traditionally given to that rehearsal is *liturgy*, from the Greek word meaning roughly "to work publicly for the common good." Christians are called corporately to become Jesus' incarnate presence to the world by living well in relationship—to other persons, other creatures, and God—so as to imagine a better way to live, a way to live captured by theosis. In other words, Harink would agree with Roger Owens, who says, "The church does not reflect the life of God in its practices, nor does it join God's activity somewhere else. The church *is* God's activity . . . as the body of Christ, practicing the life of God as it practices its own life in the world."[144]

Reconsidering Pneumatology

While Fiddes, Grenz, and Harink point to the pneumatological orientation of theosis, Pinnock explicitly draws it out in his pneumatic soteriology. Members of the gathered fellowship are assimilated into Christ through faith and the sacraments, becoming Christ's body in and through the agency of the Holy Spirit. Out of and from the Spirit's excessiveness, human beings are invited up in order to participate in church's activity of celebrating the love of Father for Son and Son for Father so that our lives become doxological responses to that love. The indwelling of the Spirit "is nothing less than our entering into partnership with God, our becoming fellow workers with him (1 Cor 3:9), for the sake of bringing the divine economy to its ultimate fulfillment."[145] Our four Baptist theologians' reconsideration of soteriology in light of the Orthodox concept of deification, as especially carried out by Pinnock, opens up the possibility of intoning a soteriology in a pneumatological key. This is especially significant when one takes into account that since the eighteenth century, Baptist theology in North America, has been slow, even woeful, to adopt any pneumatological orientation in its approaches to soteriology. Baptist soteriologies which have been solely built, on the one hand, on christological categories of Western theology and, on the other hand, on largely forensic-juridical categories of the Reformation, are ultimately inadequate. Developing

144. Owens, *Shape of Participation*, 93. Emphasis original.

145. Russell, *Fellow Workers*, 36.

a trinitarian theology of salvation with an accent on the indwelling of the Spirit can substantively alter Baptist soteriologies so as to emphasize that we are justified in order to participate in the full communion of the Three-are-One.[146]

Concluding Thought

In her summary of the patristic doctrine of theosis, A. N. Williams offers a list of criteria common to the various ways theologians have described deification. She readily acknowledges the diversity among the different ways sharing in the divine life has been described. Nonetheless, she observes, "There is a firm core that distinguishes the doctrine from some other model of sanctification."[147] According to Williams, those criteria are: "Where we find the ideas of participation in divine life, union with God and humanity, portrayed as human destiny, and a mode of articulating divine transcendence in this context, we can say we are dealing with a doctrine of deification."[148]

I would contend that how our four contemporary Baptist theologians understand the term "participation in God" in their thematic appropriation of theosis meet the criteria identified by Williams. Pinnock, Grenz, Fiddes, and Harink share many of the convictions held by those who affirm theosis. They do not develop a doctrine of theosis. Nor do they offer any unique or distinctive contribution to a dogmatic understanding of theosis. Rather, they respectively engage deification in a thematic fashion in order to explore new theological vistas for evangelical and Baptist theologies, beckoning other evangelicals and Baptists to set off on fresh pathways as they contemplate the gracious call to partake of the divine nature in Christ's body, through the transfiguring power of the Holy Spirit.

146. Cf. Macchia, *Justified in Spirit*.

147. Williams, *Ground of Union*, 32. Williams claims that the concepts of participation, union, and adoption signal a doctrine of deification. "Without one of these three concepts—especially without participation and union—we are speaking of some form of sanctification that is not specifically deficiation" (ibid., 32). Cf. Neder, *Participation in Christ*, 91.

148. Williams, *Ground of Union*, 32.

Resources for Deification in Christian Theology

Compiled by Vladimir Kharlamov

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